

From the Beginning It Was Not So

by Phil Beach Jr.

The sermon calls believers to seek God's original intention for their lives rather than settling for human concessions influenced by a hardened heart.

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Scripture: Matthew 19:1

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Description

Phil Beach Jr. emphasizes the importance of aligning our lives with God's original intentions, as revealed in Scripture, rather than settling for the status quo or concessions made due to human stubbornness. He uses Matthew 19 to illustrate that God's highest intention regarding marriage and divorce was established from the beginning, and warns against justifying our actions based on what is currently accepted or permitted. The preacher calls for a spirit of prayer and earnest seeking of God's will, urging believers to not be content with less than God's perfect plan for their lives, families, and the church. He challenges the congregation to examine areas where they may be accepting God's concessions instead of striving for His highest intentions.

Transcript

Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Is everything on? Good.

Whenever the adults want to take the children, that's fine. I don't want to see any running from the children. I want to see quietness.

And I want to see everyone walk single file. No running. And when you get out in the hallway, there's no running to the classrooms.

Thank you. If you turn your Bibles to Matthew chapter 19. Matthew.

Matthew chapter 19. Father, thank you for your word this morning. I pray, God, that you will give us wisdom and understanding as we discuss these matters that are very near and dear to your heart.

And that you will enable us, Lord, to search your word through prayer and to be capable of hearing your word and aligning by the power of your spirit our lives up with your word. And Lord, I pray that as we begin to discover that so much of our life and so much of the church is out of agreement with your intention, that you would birth in us a spirit of prayer, knowing that only by prayer, prayer and prayer, prayer that is

inspired by the truth of your word, prayer that is upon the foundation of truth, only by prayer, this kind of prayer, energized by the power of the Holy Spirit, are we going to see change occur in our lives and we're going to see change occur in the house that is called by your name. And I pray, Lord, that this, that you placed in my spirit would serve as a means to awaken us and to stimulate prayer in the word and that a domino effect might occur, that this might spur many people on to pray in this new way, Lord, through the word, to pray the word, and that it might result in real changes that occur in individual lives and families, and also, Lord, that it might result in a revival of prayer, which alone is going to bring about a restoration and a refreshing and a revival in the church.

We commit the word into your hands and pray you'll bring forth by it, in Jesus' name, amen. Matthew chapter 19, beginning in verse number 1, we're going to look at a particular subject that is very controversial in the church today, but we're not going to be talking about that subject. We're looking at this subject because it just so happens that this particular subject was one that Jesus identified in order to explain a principle, a principle that was very, very important for us to understand.

Beginning in verse number 1, Matthew 19, And it came to pass that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee and came into the coast of Judea beyond Jordan, and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them there. The Pharisees also came to him, tempting him and saying to him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? Now, I want you to notice the response of Jesus because the response of Jesus lays a foundational truth that would be very useful and profitable for us to grasp. This truth paves the way for this kind of thinking.

Listen carefully. The standard is not the way it is now, but the way it was at the beginning. There is a great error being made today in every area of the Christian life, beginning in our personal walk with Jesus, going into our families, then into the church.

And the error is this. I'm determining what is right based on the way things are, the way most people do things. That way of thinking will never, ever lead you into the very heart of the matter, into the will of God regarding the particular thing that you're thinking about or you're looking into.

You cannot determine what God's ultimate will and intention is regarding any particular matter in relation to the Christian life, whether it's personal and my walk with Jesus, or whether it's in the family and the many questions that are bombarding the Christian family today, or whether it comes into the corporate church. You can't determine what is absolutely true by just looking around and seeing what everyone else is doing, even if God is blessing it. Even if God is blessing it.

It doesn't mean that God is necessarily pleased with it. And I'll prove that by the Scripture. And my intention this morning is to awaken in us a way of thinking that will loose us, free us from improper thinking, and I believe it will really enlarge our capacity to understand what God is really after.

But it'll also, as a result, I hope and pray, birth in us a spirit of prayer that we've never known before because it will result in us saying, wow, Lord, things are really not the way you really want them to be. And therefore, I am praying, joining together with other believers, until we see the thing that you really want start happening. Don't be content with the status quo.

Don't be content with simply what is happening. But only be content when you become persuaded and you become absolutely sure by divine revelation in the Word of God exactly what God's will is on a matter. The question, can we divorce for any reason, Jesus' answer, have you not read that he which made them

at the beginning made them male and female, and said, for this cause shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and the two shall be one flesh? Now, he's quoting Genesis chapter 2, verse number 24 and Genesis chapter 1, verse number 27.

That's the place where he got this information when he said, have you not read? He was quoting the very Hebrew Bible that they themselves claim to believe in in an uncompromising fashion. Now, watch this. The same Bible, the same Bible.

Verse 7, they said unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorce and to put her away? And he said unto them, Moses, you bring up Moses? Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered or allowed you to put away your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. The title of this message, from the beginning it was not so. The particular subject that Jesus is dealing with is divorce.

We're not going to go into a dissertation on divorce this morning. But we're going to look into the statement of Jesus, because of the hardness of your hearts, He allowed you to put away your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. We're going to look at that statement and learn something about the heart of God that is profound, that is important for us to know.

In keeping with this particular subject, for a short moment longer, divorce was never in the heart of God. Jesus made it very clear that in the beginning, God never intended divorce to occur. Man, female, come together, one flesh, let no man put you asunder, you are one now, you'll remain one, that's my thought, that's my intention.

Divorce is not of me, saith the Lord. God is into bringing together, not separating. God is into making two one, not ripping one apart and making them two.

God said from the beginning, my original highest intention was no divorce. But these Pharisees and these Sadducees were quick, and they went to the very book that Jesus quoted from, the Bible, or at least the Pentateuch, which was the first five books of the Old Testament, and they quoted Moses and said, why then did Moses permit it? We see that God has revealed His will on a particular matter, and then we see in the very Bible itself that God seemingly makes a provision to contradict that will. No, I take that back.

I said seemingly. There's no seemingly about it. He did it.

He made a provision in order to lower the standard of His highest intention regarding this issue of divorce. Now, it is very important for us to understand why did God do this? Why did God do this? Please try to follow along with me this morning because I'm hoping this is going to result in you and I being able to think things through that's happening in our lives, in our families, and in the church with the intention of getting to the heart of what God's will is. Not being content with what's happening, but getting to the heart of what God's will is.

Now, why did God allow divorce? What does the Bible say? We're not going anywhere else. We're just in Matthew 19 now. Why did He allow it? Moses, verse 8, 19, Matthew, because of the hardness of your hearts allowed you to put away your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.

Now, that word hardness, listen to what it means. Hard, hardness of heart, stubborn, obstinate, perverse, indicates man's condition in his being toward God and the relation of his grace to which he ought to have a willing and receptive place in his heart. So, it could mean calloused, it could mean perverse, it could mean stubborn.

It is clear from the words of Jesus that because of the stubbornness of the heart of Israel, Moses gave them provision to divorce, but it was not God's original intention. So, the moment man, because of the hardness of his heart, receives permission by God to do something that is not ultimately God's intention, there is the potential for the waters to start getting muddy. Do we understand that? There's a potential for the waters to start getting muddy.

In other words, there's a potential for us to look at the thing that God has permitted and to assume that it is His highest intention, to assume that it's His will, to assume that it's something He wants. It is not something He wants. It is something that He granted Moses permission to make provision for, but He made it clear, Jesus said, from the beginning, it was not so.

And Jesus' intention was not to come and to grant us the freedom to do the thing that is not God's highest intention, but the very revelation of Jesus was to come in order to bring us into a participation with the highest intention of God's heart, the highest intention of God's will. We should never be content with that which God allows by concession. He consents to it because of the stubbornness of our heart and feel that getting that thing is God's highest.

Now, this is in particular divorce, but there is a principle here that is applicable to every area of our life. In every area of our life, in every area of church life, in every area of family life, there is a highest intention that God has and then there is that which is happening, which is happening because of the hardness of our heart and God is allowing it, but from the beginning it was never God's intention. And so the challenging word from the heart of God, our shepherd to you and I this morning, is this.

Are we willing, are we prepared to seek God with all of our heart in earnestness into the word of God on our knees in prayer so that God could show us any area in our personal life or in our family life or in the church that we are missing God's highest will because of hardness in our heart? And if we would repent of the hardness in our heart and repent of the area of stubbornness in our heart that we could in fact as a result of that repentance be brought into a higher participation in the will of God. What's happening in our life now because we're simply too stubborn to accept God's highest intention so God by consent is letting us settle for something less than His perfect will. It is my belief that our lives, our families, and the church is full of such things that are occurring under the principle of Moses because of the hardness of your heart allowed it, but from the beginning it was not so.

There are loads of things going on in our lives and in the church and in our family that fall under that category of God's blessing. God's allowing it to happen. We're accepting it.

But from the beginning God's highest intention is being missed. We cannot use as a standard to determine God's highest intention the words of Moses because of the hardness of your heart. We can't allow the things that God permits because of our sin as the standard of normal dealings from God to His people.

God allows people to do so many things, but it's because of the hardness of our heart. It's because of our stubbornness. It's almost because we say, God, if you don't let me do this, I'm not going to serve you.

I'm not going to love you. I'm not going to follow you. So God, because He loves us, gives us the thing we ask Him for because He doesn't want us to destroy ourselves, but the fact is His highest intention would have been something else.

There is a whole lot going on in the church today. There is a whole lot going on in our lives today. There is a whole lot going on in our families today that comes under the category of God is doing it because of our stubbornness, not because it is God's highest intention.

And it is high time that we as the people of God would come together as families, come together as Christian believers and seek to know the will of God. Search the Word of God. Search the Bible on our knees in prayer and in humility that God might reveal to us the things in our life that He may be allowing us to do, but it's because of the stubbornness of our heart, because of our sin.

We have got to be delivered from using as a standard the concession. We've got to be delivered from using as a standard the status quo, where everyone else is doing it and God's blessing them. That's true with divorce, isn't it? Everybody says, well, I know a couple who divorced and they remarried, and they're missionaries now.

God's blessing them. Well, maybe He is. And maybe they are.

But that doesn't mean that divorce becomes the standard. That doesn't mean that we let God's concession become the thing that we strive for. No, because Jesus said from the beginning it was not so.

What's going on in your life today? What's going on in your family today where if Jesus could come and speak to you, He would say, from the beginning it was not so. Or my ultimate intention for you as a believer now does not include this thing. But I say to you, it's because of the hardness of your heart.

It's because of the stubbornness of your will. It's because of the callousness of your conscience that I'm allowing you to do this thing. Have we sought God to deliver us from those things that He is doing in our life that are by way of permission because of our stubbornness, because of our immaturity, because of our sin? Have we begged God to deliver us from that will of concession and bring us into that will of original intention? God's original intention is higher than His concession.

God's original intention is higher. Sure, God created man, and God knew man would sin, but God did not create man to sin. Just because God knew man was going to sin, it certainly doesn't mean that that was God's plan.

God's higher plan was that man would become sons and daughters of God and be made into the image of the Son of God. But nevertheless, man sinned. Did God forsake man? No.

Did God continue to bless man? Yes. Did God take care of man's needs? Yes. So that must mean that God doesn't mind if we sin.

No! You see? We look at the concession. We look at the... From the beginning it wasn't so, but because of your hardness. We look at that realm of our life, and we see God's blessing and God's provision, and we see multitudes of others in that same realm, and we start thinking that's the only standard.

There's nothing higher. There's nothing better. There's nothing more excellent.

And that is a lie from the enemy. God doesn't want to redeem us in order that we walk in the realm of His concession, but God has redeemed us that we might strive by the grace of God to live in the realm of His perfect intention, His perfect will. Jesus said, I have meat that you know not of, and this meat was not to simply live on the status quo level.

This meat was not simply to exist as another person. Well, I might have missed it today, but praise God, He loves me anyway. That's all true, but that shouldn't be our attitude, because if that's our attitude, then we're setting ourselves up to become content with concession, content with God's second best, content with status quo.

We're content in following the words of Moses instead of praying, Oh God, deliver me from this rebellious heart, because that's the only reason why Moses said it, was because I was sinful. But God, I see something higher. I see something greater.

I see something more perfect. It's your original intention. It's your highest purpose, Lord.

I'm after that thing. But the thing that's going to keep me from entering into God's highest intention is always sin. The hardness of my heart, the immaturity of my life, and if I'm looking to find Scripture to justify what's going on in my life now, I might find it, but it doesn't mean that it's God's highest intention.

Just like these Pharisees, they found the words of Moses that seemed to support their belief, but they really didn't completely, but there was something there. Moses made provision. So they came and they found the Lord, and nowadays people are finding Scriptures and they're looking into the Bible and they're justifying a condition.

They're justifying a realm of living. They're justifying a certain existence, spiritual kind of existence, and they see the blessing of God in their life. They see the blessing of God in others' lives.

They find Scriptures that seem to support where they're at, but I'm telling you, they're falling short because they're not striving after God's ultimate intention. They're not striving after the thing that Jesus said, Be ye perfect, even as your heavenly Father, which is in heaven, is perfect. They're not hearing the words of the writer of Hebrews, Let us go on unto perfection.

So they're living in the realm of consent. They're living in the realm where the rain falls upon the just and the unjust, but that doesn't mean it's God's will for the unjust. He doesn't want the unjust to remain unjust.

So here Jesus outlines a major principle. Now, what I'd like to do is challenge you, as I did earlier. Where are we falling short in our life from God's highest intention? Almost everything going on in the Christian church in America today falls into the realm of Moses because of the hardness of your heart is allowing it.

But from the beginning, it was not so. The very fact, listen closely, the very fact that on this particular day, we have possibly 10 to 15 groups of believers meeting in different places, divided, one saying I'm of this one, doing their own thing, proves that God's highest intention is greatly, greatly being hindered right now. But yet, the Lord's blessing, isn't He? And the Lord is with the believers that are scattered around.

And the Lord is meeting their needs, but that doesn't mean that God's highest intention is being fulfilled. What it simply means is because of the hardness of our hearts, because of the sin in our hearts, God is allowing us to remain divided, allowing us to remain scattered, doing our own thing. But it wasn't so from the beginning.

Turn your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 4. This is what the Word of God says. Ephesians chapter 4. I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, number one, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called, with all holiness and meekness, with longsuffering. Forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

For there is one body. One body. There are not many bodies.

There is one body. One spirit. One hope.

One Lord. One faith. People say nowadays, what faith are you of? And they're talking to Christians.

What faith are you of? Oh, I'm of the Methodist faith. Oh, I'm of the Lutheran faith. Oh, I'm of the Pentecostal faith.

Oh, I'm of a Baptist faith. Oh, I'm of an Episcopal faith. Oh, I'm of the Charismatic faith.

Oh, I'm of the deeper life faith. Oh, I'm of Luther. I'm of Paul.

I'm of Peter. I'm of Apollos. Brothers and sisters, it is a mess.

God is grieved. He's grieved over it. But yet we continue on.

Acts chapter 18. I'm going to close in a few moments. I'm going to use this principle found in Matthew chapter 19 and show you how that principle can be applicable to this one particular subject among hundreds.

And by the word of God, show you how we've accepted something that is far, far, far less than God's highest intention and hardly nobody ever questions it. Hardly nobody ever challenges it. Nobody's travelling and praying, oh, God, change this thing.

No, instead they're praying God bless it. They're actually praying that God will bless the thing that falls short of his perfect will. Acts.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts. Now, look at this. Acts chapter 18.

Time check, please. Thank you. Very good.

Let's begin in verse number 1. Now, I'm taking this principle that we just spent 25 minutes on showing you from the word of God. Everybody understand the principle pretty thoroughly? All right, good. Now, this principle needs to be applied to... It needs to become a magnifying glass.

We need to apply it to every area of our life, to our families, and to all the church, to the beliefs and practices that we are engaging in in the church. And we need to find out how much of what's going on is there by concession but doesn't reflect God's ultimate intention. Whenever we find something that we can see from the word of God and from prayer, wow, this might have been going on for a long time.

Everybody might be doing it, but by golly, I see in the word of God that it's not God's highest intention. We should immediately begin to ask God to give us a burden, a spirit of prayer, so that this thing could change. We shouldn't accept it.

But I'll tell you right now, it's easier to accept it. It's easier to just go with the flow. Much easier than to stand against the tide that's going in the wrong direction.

Thank you. Listen closely. I'm just going to begin to read, all right? And we're going to be closing in about 10, 15 minutes.

All right? After these things, Paul departed from Athens and came to Corinth. Now, you know, there was a letter, there's two letters in the Bible written to the Corinthians, right? First and second Corinthians. This is the history of how the Corinthians came into existence, all right? This is it right here.

Just imagine if Paul got off a ship that was in the Atlantic Ocean from Europe coming west, landed in New York and traveled to Hackettstown, and this is the setting in Hackettstown now. Okay? And he found certain Jew named Aquila born in Potos, lately come from Italy with his wife Priscilla. Thank you, David.

Because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and were, for by their occupation, they were tent makers. And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.

And when Silas and Timothy were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ. And when they opposed themselves and blasphemed, he shook his raiment and said to them, Your blood be upon your own heads. I am clean from henceforth.

I will go unto the Gentiles. And he departed thence and entered into a certain man's house named Justus, one that worshiped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue. And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house.

Listen, and many of the Corinthians hearing believed and were baptized. Now listen to what God said. And then spoke the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Don't be afraid, but speak, and don't hold your peace.

For I am with you. No man shall set on thee to hurt thee. Listen, for I have much people in this city.

Now you know that Corinth was a huge city. I was reading earlier that only a few other cities such as Rome and also Antioch, along with one other I can't remember, were larger than Corinth. Corinth was a huge city.

It was a metropolitan area. Many people came to trade. Economically it was smashing.

It was doing well. So we're looking at several hundred thousand people that were in the city of Corinth. We're not looking at Alamuchi.

We're not looking at 200 or 600. We're looking at several hundred thousand. And God said, I have many people in this city.

So we can assume that many people were more than a handful. God had several hundred in that city he had his eye on. He said, I have many in this city that I plan on saving.

Now, this is where Paul birthed the church in Corinth. He continued there a year and six months teaching the word of God among them. So here Paul was there a whole year and six months regularly preaching the gospel.

I guarantee hundreds of people got saved. Now there's no way of knowing the amount of people, granted. There's no way of knowing it.

But Jesus said, I have many in this city and he preached for a year and six months. So let's assume that a good handful, we won't even say hundreds, a good handful of people got saved. Now, turn your Bibles to 1 Corinthians.

After Paul left Corinth, he started getting words delivered to him from certain people. And these words were not very encouraging. Some were saying there's sin going on in the church at Corinth.

Others were saying it's divided. The church is being divided. Others were saying there's no leadership in the church.

All different kinds of problems were going on in the Corinthian church. Listen to this, just a little background. Corinth was an important cosmopolitan Greek city located on a large isthmus about 50 miles west of Athens.

It was one of the largest cities in the entire Roman Empire. Only Rome, Alexandria was the one I couldn't remember, and Antioch had more people. It's a big city.

Corinth was a major trade route and had a thriving economy. And the vices of east and west converged there. Greeks, Romans, Jews, and a mixed multitude of sailors and merchants flocked to its crosslands.

Corinthian-style architecture was famous throughout the whole known world. You're looking at a happening place, right? You're looking at a happening place. Now, turn your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 1, verse 10.

Now, I beseech you, brethren, by the name of the Lord. He's speaking to the church. First fallacy.

There's a number of churches in Hackettstown. No, there's not. There's one church in Hackettstown.

There's not a number of churches. There's one church. What did we read in Ephesians chapter 4? One Lord, one body, one body.

The Bible never addresses more than one church in a particular town or city. The only time the Bible addresses churches, plural, is when, for example, Paul was writing to Galatia. Galatia was a province, and in that province, there were several towns and cities.

So he talked about the churches, plural, in Galatia. For example, Paul could write the churches, plural, in one county. The church in Washington.

The church in Hackettstown. The church in Bud Lake. The church in Mansfield, wherever.

But when Paul went to the town, he wasn't addressing churches. He was addressing the church. Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of the Lord, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you.

Now remember, we're applying the principle of Matthew chapter 19 to this one particular subject, and that is the local church in any given town or city. That you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. Listen.

For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which were of Colo, that there are contentions among you. Rivalry is the word. A better word is rivalry.

Quarreling. Competition. For this I say, that every one of you says, I'm of Paul.

I'm of Apollos. I'm of Cephas. I'm of Christ.

Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? Here is a condition that has begun to develop in the Corinthian church that today is simply accepted as normal. But Paul was crying out and yelling out with yellow lights flashing, Hey! Hey! You better watch it, because there is a leaven coming into the church in Corinth that is going to destroy it if it's not dealt with. Now you know what these people were doing? There was one church, when Paul came to Corinth and preached for a year and six months, he didn't go from church to church.

He met with the church and preached and taught daily. And then when he left, he got word that that church, that one undivided church, began to break up. And one section said, We're of Paul.

Another section said, We're of Apollos. Another section said, We're of Cephas. And then a more spiritual section said, We're of Christ.

You know what they were doing? They were making churches out of the church in the city of Corinth. And they were setting up pastors over each one. But then there was a real spiritual group where we don't have any pastors.

Christ is our shepherd. We don't call anyone pastor. We've heard that before, haven't we? Y'all can be of men, but we're not of men.

We're of Christ. And I'm sure the of Paul group was meeting here, and the of Cephas group was meeting here, and the of Cephas group was meeting here, and the of Apollos group was meeting over there, and the of Christ group, well, who knows where they met. They were spiritual.

And Paul said, You're all wrong. You're all wrong. 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse number 19.

When the church starts doing that, they're falling prey to the wisdom of this world. Listen to what Paul said. 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 knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. Let no man glory in men, for all things are yours. Let no man glory in men.

You know what that means? Let no one say, I'm of this one. I'm of that one. I'm of that one.

I'm of Apollos. I'm of River of Life. I'm of Cornerstone.

I'm of Pastor Beach. I'm of Pastor Santiago. I'm of Pastor Murphy.

I'm of Pastor this. Ah, please, let's grow up. What is Paul's? Is this the word of God or not? I mean, tell me, am I just stirring up stuff that's not necessary or is this what the Bible says? How far, far we have fallen.

How low we have come. Now verse 22, listen. Whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come, all are yours.

And you are Christ's and Christ is God's. There's no reason to claim personal ownership over any particular minister. There's no reason for any particular group to separate themselves from what God's doing in a city and join together under the headship of Christ.

I'll tell you, I don't know if I should go here or not because I'll tell you, a lot of trouble. I'll tell you why it's happening. Because people want leaders to follow and leaders want people to follow them who have not been crucified with Christ.

That's why it's happening. People say it's the leadership's fault. Well, I'll tell you what, if the sheep hadn't been so foolish as to look to a man instead of their shepherd, the leaders wouldn't have people flocking to them.

And if the leaders hadn't been so foolish as to think that they were God's gift to the church and realize that they're nothing and that their intention was not to build a kingdom but to serve the body, then they never would raise themselves up as great leaders seeking people to follow them. But here is a condition that is everywhere and people are accepting it as the norm and they don't realize that Jesus is saying these things are like this because of the hardness of your heart. But from the beginning, God's original intention, it was not so.

Acts 20. Listen to what Paul said. I'm closing.

Acts 20, verse 17. And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus. Now, Ephesus was what? One city in Asia Minor.

He called the elders of the what? Of the what? Churches? No, church, singular. One church. One gathering.

One body. One group of saints. Within that group, shepherds, pastors, teachers, servants.

Right? The elders, plural. They didn't say the pastor. Elders, plural.

He called for the elders of the one church in the great city, Ephesus. And here's what he said to them. Verse 28.

Take heed, therefore, to yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers. The church of God, which he purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

So there were going to be wolves that were going to come in to the one church in Ephesus, and Paul said, and not spare the flock. They were going to do what wolves do. What do wolves do with sheep? Eat them for lunch.

But what else did Paul say? Also, of your own selves. Now, who's he talking to now? Of your own selves. Who's he talking to? The elders.

Within the elders, within the group of those called by God to oversee the church, here's what's going to happen. Of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. The perverse things that Paul said would be spoken would result in drawing parts of the body, parts, groups of the saints from that one church away to themselves.

And when you pull someone away to yourself, by doing so you separate them from the whole. You separate them from the rest of the elders. Don't you? This is my pastor and my church now.

So now we're separate from what God's doing in Ephesus. We're pulling them to me. This is my kingdom, my group.

This is a church now. Oh, that's a church too. We're a different church.

Well, we're one church, but we're two churches. Well, we're not really two churches, but we don't have anything to do with each other. Therefore, watch, verse 31, and remember that by the space of three years I cease not to warn every one of you night and day with tears.

All right. There you go. Matthew 19 principle applied to one subject, and look what it does to it.

It exposes it for what it is, falling way short of God's intention. What are you saying, preacher? It's not what I'm saying. It's what the Bible's saying.

Don't come back with what are you trying to say. It's not a matter of what I'm trying to say. What's God trying to say? What's God saying? Oh, are we supposed to? Don't start.

We need to get on our knees and pray. Oh, God, God, deliver us from this dreadful falling short of your perfect intention, and establish what you're after. Now, that's one subject under the scrutiny of the principle in Matthew 19.

What will happen with the other subjects under the scrutiny of Matthew 19? What will happen if we put our families under the scrutiny of Matthew 19? What will happen if we put our personal lives? How frequently do Christians pray? What does the Bible say? Pray without ceasing. Oh, but God blesses me when I spend 15 minutes with Him in the morning. Does that mean that it's what He wants? No.

Well, God's blessing me with all this prosperity. Does that mean that's what His highest intention is? No. Beloved, the purpose of this message this morning was to provoke you and me into a greater pursuit after seeking God's will and not accepting status quo, not accepting the way things are as though God is necessarily pleased just because He's blessing it.

I challenge you in the name of the Lord. I'm begging you in the grace of Jesus Christ. Get in and search the Word and find out what God's highest intention is for your life as a Christian, for your life as a family, and for the life of the church.

And when you discover it, be prepared to weep. Be prepared to cry. Be prepared to have God give you a burden so that you start praying for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven, because you'll find out for the most part it's not being done.

But the Moses Law is being done. The Moses Law. The concession because of our sin.

But I'll close with this, brothers and sisters. There's a people in every generation who break through status quo, who break through the norm, who ask questions, who search diligently the Word of God, the Bereans, those who search the Scriptures to see whether these things really be so or not. And these people in every generation have groaned and have prayed and have not been content with what was visible, but they wanted God's will to be done.

And even in this generation, in this hour, there are a people who are not being content with what's going on, but they've gone into the Word of God and they've seen and they've understood God's higher intention, and they see how the things that they see contradict it and fall short, but instead of saying, oh, what's the use of going against the tide? They get in and pray and God is birthing in them the travail of His own heart and they're praying the Word of God and they're praying day and night and they're not going to

be content until God brings forth and bursts forth on the scene and puts things in order. And it doesn't matter how long it takes. It doesn't matter how much sweat.

It doesn't matter how much prayer and fasting. It doesn't matter. We're going to do it because God won't be satisfied until the intention, the highest intention of His heart is realized in the church.

Be a part of that praying group and your life will never be the same. Father, we thank You for the Word. We thank You, Lord, for the Holy Spirit and we thank You for challenging us this morning.

I pray, God, that You'll take this Word and bring revelation and bring challenge in the heart and that the hearers of this Word, each one of us, Lord, would be challenged to pray and search the Word more diligently and come to where we can understand the difference between the thing that You wanted from the beginning and the thing that You're allowing because of the hardness of our heart. And don't let us be content with one thing that is currently happening in our lives and in our families and in the church. That's the result of the hardness of our heart.

Don't let us be content with anything in that realm, but let us press on until everything in our life can conform to the way God intended it to be from the beginning. God, I pray You'll not give us rest. You'll not give the hearers rest to accept the norm, to accept the easy way, to accept the status quo, to follow the way everyone else does it.

But You'll give us passion and zeal and Holy Ghost fire to get in and search the Scriptures until we know that we know what God's thought is on a particular subject in the church and then pray and pray and pray and pray until we see it happen. God, I'm depending on You to do it. And I believe You will.

In Jesus' name, amen and amen. Hallelujah to God. Hallelujah to God.

Search the Scriptures, brothers and sisters. Be diligent on your knees in prayer. Depend on the Holy Spirit and let Him show you what His intention is.

God bless you.

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