

Symptoms of a Dying Church - Part 2

by Sam Ketcher

The sermon warns about the symptoms of a dying church, including lack of fire of God, desperation and worldliness, preaching for money and popularity, and a desire to be like the world.

Duration: 47:45

Scripture: Revelation 3:3-4

Topics: "Revival", "Spiritual Awakening"

Description

Sam Ketcher addresses the alarming symptoms of a dying church, drawing parallels from Revelations chapter 3 and the story of Samuel. He emphasizes the importance of keeping the fire of God alive within the church, warning against the dangers of disobedience, worldliness, and the pursuit of money over spiritual integrity. Ketcher highlights that many churches today have forced God outside, neglecting His presence and succumbing to worldly influences. He calls for a return to sound doctrine and a genuine relationship with God, urging congregations to awaken from spiritual slumber and embrace the truth of the Gospel.

Transcript

Revelations chapter 3, and we're going to, I'm going to go back to 1 Samuel again because there's some things that the Lord has shown me, I believe that have happened in Samuel, that parallels of what's going on today, and we touched on a little bit about that this morning. Revelations chapter 3, and I will try not to be as long-winded as I was this morning, although I cannot guarantee. Revelations chapter 3, it says, If thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour will come upon thee.

Thou hast a few names, even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy. He that overcometh the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit say unto the churches.

Dear Heavenly Father, again I ask that you bless your word, reveal your word, and anoint it with your Holy Spirit, and let you speak and not me, dear Lord Jesus. You know exactly what we need. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Now I want to talk about this morning, I know we talked about this morning about where is the fire of God in our churches, amen? And we talked about some of the symptoms of the churches that have lost that fire. And as I begin to think about this, if you read here, God's talking to this church and He says, I know thy works, thou hast a name, you have a church sign that has your name on it, but you are dead. Now I mentioned this morning that we can pretty much, the greatest proof that a church is dead is that it has closed its doors, amen? But before someone, the last person closes the door and shuts out the lights, physically, spiritually, there are some people that have closed the door to God before that even happened.

And there can come a point, and this is a warning that all churches need to hear and all Christians need to hear. You see, in the churches here in Revelations, that one church, he says that Jesus is on the outside knocking on the door, begging the church to open up and let Him in, to have fellowship with Him. It's a sad thing when God has to look at a church on the outside and knock on the door and say, let me in.

But there are many churches today in America where God is, they have forced God on the outside, and He is still pleading with them. And what's amazing here, He is telling them that you are dead. But He also tells them, but wait, thou hast a few names which have not defiled their garments, and they walk with Me.

You know, sometimes the majority, that's the picture that you get when you look at a church, when you look at the majority. We don't see the minority, we don't see the core group that are holding things together. But God does, amen? Let us not be weary in well-doing.

God sees. He knows who are His. He knows who are crying out to Him and who are being faithful to His Word and His doctrines, who are standing for the truth.

So no matter if you are in the minority, if you are the only one seeking after God in this community, God still sees. But I begin to think about this in relation to what we talked about this morning. But before a church dies, before the fire of God leaves a church, there are some symptoms you can tell, you can see the process of dying.

If you've ever worked in hospice, or if you've ever watched a loved one die, you know there are some things to look for, things that will happen before they leave this earth, amen? And if you look at the church today, you can see symptoms of a church that is dying. And it's stuff that we should look at and warn ourselves about and guard ourselves against. You may be asking, why are you telling us this? Well, my friends, I believe this is a message that every church in America needs to hear.

And you may have other Christian brothers and sisters in other churches that God may be asking you to warn and show them the truth in Scripture. Because as we learn with the ten virgins, the five foolish ones, it is possible to let the fire go out, and you'll be separated from God, amen? We have to guard ourselves against this. As I was driving here this evening, and I noticed right before you get on the turnpike at Big Cabin, you see all the trucks flying down the highway, and they're taking the big old semis, they're taking merchandise, whatever it is, they're hauling all across the country.

Our economy depends on the things that keep on traveling, right? Our economy depends on the trucks to get the merchandise there. But what would happen if all the trucks stopped? What would happen if every worker stopped working and everything shut down? Our economy would go even further down the tubes, wouldn't it? What would happen if everybody in our churches stopped working and just sat there? The kingdom of God would begin to suffer greatly, amen? And the fire would go out. But there are some things that we need to look at and watch out for, and not just concerning a church, but in our own lives, my

friends.

You can tell when you begin to drift away from God. You can tell! You can tell when you grow distant. I don't know about you, but there's times when I... You know, I don't wake up in the mornings all the time on cloud nine, do you? But if you allow yourself to stay there, and then you just, like I said this morning, put the Bible away, and you forget to pray and you refuse to pray, you start to grow distant.

Then you stop going to church. And the longer you stay away from church, the more easier it is not to go, and before too long, it's been months and years, and you wonder, what happened? That is why we have to fight to keep the fire, amen? Wives, how would you like it if your husbands stopped fighting for you? How would you like it if your husbands stopped talking to you? Now, the husbands may prefer you women to stop talking to them, but you know, you wives don't like that, do you? You don't like that. If your husbands begin to ignore you and never came home, you can't have a marriage like that, can you? And there begins to be a distance.

A distance comes between you and your spouse, and then that grows into bitterness. And then before too long, you can look at each other and you think, I don't even know this person. That's why, just like in a marriage, you have to fight to make it work, don't you? You have to.

But there are some things that we need to look at, and I believe there are some things happening in our churches today that are going against the Word of God. Because whenever a church begins to start dying, a church can get desperate, amen? Whenever someone is cornered and they know their life is in danger, they begin to get desperate, and sometimes they'll do things they would have never thought they would have ever done just to survive. And my friends, we have to be careful.

I know there's a lot of people, they have a lot of seminars of trying to show people how to grow your church. I remember one time I went to a church and it was how to double your Sunday school class. And one of the techniques they told the people was, look at the obituaries and see who died, and send the families of that person a condolence card from the church in hopes that maybe they'll come to your church.

True story. My friends, how wrong is that? When someone is going through a tragic time and all you can think about, hey, maybe we can feed on this and take advantage of this death and get them to come to church. All in the name of numbers.

We're getting desperate, amen? And we can't allow ourselves to do that. And I know your church has it and a lot of them, we have the numbers on there and sometimes we can look at those numbers time and time again and we get depressed and we say, oh, only so and so showed up today. My friends, it doesn't matter.

Whenever two or more are gathered, God says, I will be in the midst of thee, amen? And God is the majority. I've been in prayer with a couple of preachers in a living room and we were in prayer and I felt the presence of God coming to the living room with just us. God is real and He is powerful.

And we don't have to use any type of tricks to bring anybody in because if the Spirit of God is in us and we're walking with Him, people will be drawn to that, amen? If you would, go ahead and turn back to 1 Samuel. 1 Samuel, and we got through reading about, we talked about Eli and his wicked sons. We saw some symptoms of a dying church back then.

They stopped preaching the Word of God. They were allowing wickedness to happen amongst the preachers and then it led to the church people to start sinning. And so many times in church, the people will adapt or adopt the personality of the preacher.

If a preacher says it's okay, guess what? The church people are going to say, hey, it's okay. The preacher said it was. So that's why God holds preachers to a real severe, He holds us accountable.

That's why God told Ezekiel, if you don't warn the people that judgment is coming, their blood will be on your hands. I will stand before God one day and have to give an account for everything I preached and everything I said and everything I didn't say, amen? That's why you need to be careful of who you bring in to be your pastor. You need to make sure he is the man that God wants you to have here.

And don't be mistaken, like so many people think, that if we bring a young pastor in, then maybe that will bring in the young people. That's not necessarily the case. Don't look at how young they are or how old they are.

Let God guide you with His Holy Spirit and you find out what He believes, amen? You don't just throw somebody in there. You just don't throw them in there. But here we can see, Eli died.

His two sons died. And now Samuel, who is the prophet and judge of Israel. And he came in and he did what was right in the eyes of God.

And it came to the point where Israel, they went to Samuel and said, cry out to God that He would save us and deliver us from the Philistines. And Samuel did this. He cried out to God for God to save them.

And God did and defeated the Philistines. But then, Samuel, he ruled well, but he got old. And in chapter 8 it says this, And it came to pass when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel.

Now the name of the firstborn was Joel, and the name of the second was Abiham. They were judges in Beersheba. And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre and took bribes and perverted judgment.

I feel sorry for Samuel. He saw how God had judged Eli and his two sons for turning from God. And now Samuel, who has dedicated his whole life to preach righteousness and judgment.

And now to see his own two sons fall into wickedness. But I notice something that says here, that they turned aside after filthy lucre and took bribes and perverted judgment. In other words, they were in it for the money.

They were in it for the money. And they did not preach righteousness. Now we can look at the churches today, especially when we turn on the TV and we can see many people out there preaching for money.

Amen? Every time you turn around, all they want is your money. Times haven't changed, has it? You see, Jesus warned us time and time again. He said there will come a time when men will come in My name saying that I am Christ.

And they will deceive many. There's other parts of the Scriptures where it says that they will make merchandise of you. They're only in it for the money.

And my friends, I've seen many a preacher that will get up and preach Christ. But they'll deceive people. And their only goal is to get money.

If you would, turn to Titus chapter 1. Titus chapter 1. And my friends, you may be thinking, well, Sam, you're describing the charismatic movement. Well, yes, I am describing a lot of what's going on in the charismatic movement. Let me tell you something, friends.

There are ones in the free will of the Baptist denomination too that are doing the exact same things. They will walk over the poor and the widows just to get a place of authority. We have to deal with this too, even in our denomination.

So it affects us as well. But it says in Titus chapter 1, starting in verse 9, Holding fast the faithful word as He hath been taught, that He may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince gainsayers. He is talking about bishops, about deacons.

For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, especially they of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. You see, even in New Testament times, they were warning people about men like this. And my friends, we can see this today.

Amen. And we have to be on guard, and we have to be watching and protecting the sheep. Amen.

This is one thing I noticed, the similarities. And this is another example and a symptom of a dying church. Whenever men rise up.

You know, isn't it something today, like I talked about this morning, we've got all these Christian bookstores, and they sell all these books, and we all rush to go buy these books to tell us how to have this, how to get what we want out of life, and how to live the Christian life, and how to pray, or how to have faith, or how to do this, and we have to have all these books, and we buy it, don't we? And then it doesn't stop there. Then they want to sell us their preaching CDs, and their preaching tapes, and their preaching videos. And then it doesn't stop there.

There are some of these traveling evangelists you have to pay thousands of dollars just to get them to come to your church. Can we not see the symptoms of a dying church? So one, tonight we can see men that preach just for money. And let me tell you something, it goes just beyond that.

There are many a preachers, for many years, but let me just, in our time frame here, in the past 20 years, who have stood behind the pulpits and not preached the whole Word of God because they wanted to keep their job. Because they did not want to offend. They didn't want to make the deacons mad.

They didn't want to make the church people mad. So they just held their peace and just preached whatever it took to make everybody get along. Have we not seen that? I have seen preachers that would ignore stuff that happened in the church all for the cause of getting along and they did not want to get fired.

My friends, that is the same thing as preaching for filthy lucre. We are not in it for the money. It is not a popularity contest.

We are here to preach the Word of God. Amen? Because our souls depend on it. That is how we are fed.

The Scripture says that we are made clean by the Word. And if we don't hear the Word of God, we will dry up. Our faith will dry up.

Here's another thing I noticed. After these two wicked men began to judge, it says, then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together and came to Samuel unto Ramah. And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways.

Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. Now just by looking at that, you say, well, what does that have to do with this? Well, let me just tell you. They came to the prophet who had proclaimed the Word of God and they told them, we no longer like the way we are doing things.

We no longer want a prophet over us. Your sons have messed it up. Now, we want to be like the world.

The world has kings that judge over them. We want to be like them. We want to do what they do.

We like that. But you know how this can relate today to today's church? Today's church has looked at God and said we want to be like the world. The world and the worldly culture looks good.

We want to be like them. Let's start doing things like the world does things. And let me just tell you what God told Samuel.

And the Lord said to Samuel, hearken unto the voice of the people and all that they say unto thee, for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them. You see, in today's churches, and I don't know how much you all know of what's going on in a lot of other churches, but there is a flood of worldliness that has come in. A flood of it.

And it's tearing churches apart. It's tearing them apart. You see, the devil is smart.

He knows exactly how to mess things up. He knows exactly how to destroy evangelism. He knows exactly how to stop missions.

You see, our young people today, they looked at the church and they saw that there was a lack of love in our church. Amen? We can see that. The young people looked at the churches and said, hey, all they do is fight.

We don't see no power there. We don't see the presence of God. All we do is come and sing our three songs and hear a dry and boring sermon.

And people get more excited over a church dinner than they do the Word of God. Amen? And so the young people saw this and they're getting tired. They're wanting to experience God.

They're wanting to find something real. And then the devil comes along and says, hey, I can offer you something. But he wouldn't come as the devil.

You see, the Scripture says that even Satan himself will transform himself into an angel of light and make himself look like a minister of righteousness. And now there is a new movement coming in invading the churches called the Emergent Movement. I don't know if you all have heard about this.

If you haven't, you start doing research so you can protect your church from it. And so you can warn other people. But it's called the Emergent Movement, the Emergent Church.

And what it is, it's liberalism repackaged. And they're trying to sell it to our young people. The devil knows you want to bring something down.

You get a hold of the young people. Amen? That's how Hitler did it. He got a hold of the youth.

And that's how the devil does it. And so now the young people are hearing these really nice messages. They say, oh, God is not angry.

He's not angry at sin. You want to be loved, don't you? You want to find a community that will accept you just the way you are. You don't want to hear them hellfire and brimstone preachers and all they do is judge.

You don't want to hear about hell, do you? And this is what they're doing. And they're sowing seeds of doubt about the Word of God. You see, it used to be in times of old they tried to destroy the Word of God.

Amen? And the devil, he tried his best to stamp out the Word of God. But he found out that it wouldn't work. So then what did he try to do? He tried to change the Word of God.

And I don't know about you, but I am a King James Bible man. That's what I preach out of. You know, I'm just a high school graduate.

No college education. I'm just a custodian, but I can understand the King James Bible. Why? Because I've got the Holy Spirit in me and it's the Holy Spirit that gives us understanding.

I think it's so strange that we'll teach our kids Shakespeare in high school, but yet we think they're too dumb to understand the King James. It doesn't make sense. And so then the devil comes along and he starts bringing in perversions and trying to change the Word of God.

But God promises He will always preserve His Word. And guess what? The Word of God is still going out. The Word of God is still being preached.

So then the devil has to do something else. And now with this new emergent movement, now you can quote them a Scripture about hell and they'll flip it around and say, oh, that's not what it is. It's not talking about hell in a literal sense.

It's talking about hell on earth. This life we're living now, it's hell on earth and it's up to us to make it a better place. And God wants us here to make it a beautiful place to live out our dreams.

And it's all about works. Let's do good works, which we should do good works. Amen? But my friends, good works will not save us.

Only Jesus Christ. And so now they've come in. They've twisted the Scriptures.

And now our young people are no longer, a lot of them are not reading the Word of God for themselves. They're listening to somebody else tell them what they think it means. And that is very dangerous.

Nowadays in churches, we've gotten so lazy. We're too lazy to hold a hymnal, right? So we've got to have projectors to flash the words on the screen. But just watch, there's going to come a time when we're going to get too lazy to open our Bibles up in church and they're going to say, oh, that's okay.

We'll just flash the words up on the screen. You don't have to do nothing. We'll tell you exactly what it is, exactly what it means.

And before too long, we won't open up our Bibles at church. And before too long, we won't open up our Bibles at home because we're dependent upon a man to tell us what it means. We have no minds of our own.

Like Paul said, we're ever learning, but never able to come to the full understanding and the knowledge of God. Can you see that? My friends, I can stand up here and tell you, it says in the Bible this and this and this. And you better be saying, where exactly? I've been doing some research and reading some guys' books that are part of this movement.

And all throughout this book it says, and it says in the Scriptures, and God says this. And I've been studying the Word of God long enough that I know that is not what the Word of God says. But our young people do not know the difference.

My friends, our young people have a big target on their backs. And like I said this morning, we have to stand up and proclaim the Word of God and not compromise for their sakes. Amen? And we cannot let the world come into our church because it will destroy us.

If you would, turn to 1 John 2. And if you all haven't had to deal with this at this church, you should praise God. I don't know if you have or not, but I have seen too many times of young preachers coming into a church, all starry-eyed, wanting to build them a big old church, a big old mega church. And they think that if they just implement the things of the world, if they can just look like the world and appeal to the world, look like them, act like them, talk like them, it will get them to come in and it will get them saved.

But my friends, whenever you have to reduce and resort to worldly means in order to try to win people to Christ, you have already failed. Because the power to win people to Christ is not by going out and being someone you're not. The power to win people to Christ is by the power of the Gospel.

Amen? I know people that have gone out and gotten tattoos and dressed up like bikers just so they can try to witness to bikers. My friends, first of all, just by going out and getting tattoos and dressing like bikers doesn't make you a biker. Amen? It makes you a fraud.

You are not who you say you are. Now if you were a biker and you already had tattoos, and then you got saved, well guess what? You could go out and witness to bikers. But now we've got men, we've got pretty boys, we've got sissy boys that want to come up with their holes in their blue jeans and their frosty hairs and be all cool for everybody and talk like the world in hopes that they can trick the world in coming to Christ.

Paul said, I didn't come to you basically with fancy speech, with big words. Paul preached Christ and Him crucified. When He was on Mars Hill, He didn't try to appeal to all the different gods.

He didn't try to appeal to their culture. He didn't try to dress Jesus up in the culture of the day. He told them about Jesus.

That's what He did. And He didn't try to hang any worldly ornaments on it. Then 1 John 2, verse 15, it says, Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.

If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world. Here we are commanded to love not the world, as in do not love their culture, do not lust after their culture.

It has no place in the house of God. No place. And it says that the love of the Father is not in Him if He loves the world like that.

I know of a church that brought in a secular rock band. And the secular rock band says, You know that we're not a Christian band, right? And the preacher said, Oh yeah, yeah, we know. Our youth really loves rock music.

Can we see the problem? You see here, Israel said, We want to be like the world. And now today, the church is saying, We want to be like the world. I've seen preachers time and time again.

They say, Well, we've got to do these things to get them in. And I say, No. The reason why they are wanting to do those things is because they want to do those things.

Because preachers want to bring in rock music, it's not because to reach the Lord, it's because they love rock music. Amen? I've seen preachers do entire sermon outlines and they use a movie as their outline. And they've showed movie clips in the church house.

Why do they do that? Because they love the world. And that's what's in their hearts. Can we see that? My friends, I know here in Quapaw, y'all may not have to deal with this type of stuff in this community, but it is going on.

People are leaving the small churches and the rural churches in droves. And they're all flocking to the big churches that'll tell them what they want. That'll give them a song and dance.

We're losing people. There are free will Baptist churches that are having to be closed down because the people are leaving. And I think and I pray that we need to start standing up and our young people need to start seeing us stand up and not walk in the world, but walk in holiness and let's show them how it's supposed to be done.

Amen? We need to get that fire back in us again. You know, like I talked about this morning, our young people are not used to hellfire and brimstone preaching. And I've even experienced this now.

A lot of our older people aren't used to it either. A lot of the preachers that were young in the 60's, they don't like the hellfire and brimstone preaching because they were the long-haired hippies in that day and they didn't want no preacher telling them what was right and wrong. Amen? How dare you judge me! But my friends, if we would get back to Holy Spirit filled preaching once again, we would see a drastic change.

I know it and I believe it. We need that desperately. We do not need the world.

We don't need the worldly culture. All we need is Jesus Christ. And when Jesus Christ becomes not enough for our churches, God help us.

Amen? God help us. So we can see here, they were in it for the money. They wanted to be like the world.

Did I notice something else? After they chose themselves the king, they chose Saul. Saul, it says that he was head and shoulders above everybody else, wasn't he? He looked good. He was handsome.

He fit the part. It even came to pass after he was anointed that the Holy Spirit came on him and he prophesied. And it actually says that God gave Saul a new heart.

A new heart. And he started out a good king. He was doing good.

But then there was a problem. Saul had a problem, just like our church today has a problem. And it's called disobedience.

Disobedience. And if you read in 1 Samuel chapter 16, I'm in the wrong chapter. We all know a lot of the times that Saul disobeyed God.

He went and offered up sacrifices when he wasn't supposed to. That was Samuel's job. And then he disobeyed God when he didn't do exactly what He told him to when He told him to kill the certain king.

Saul began to display many times his disobedience and disregard for God's Word. And then something happens. It says in verse 14, But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him.

And Saul's servant said unto him, Behold, now an evil spirit from God troubles thee. Let our Lord now command thy servants which are before thee to seek out a man who is a cunning player of a harp, and it shall come to pass when the evil spirit from God is upon thee that he shall play with his hand and thou shalt be well. And we know the rest of it.

They went and they found David, and David was an awesome harp player. And whenever David would begin to play for the king, the evil spirit would depart from the king. But then the evil spirit would come back with me.

You see, as I look at today's church today, you see, we've got a problem with disobedience. We don't want to obey God anymore. And we see this with Saul.

And the only thing that can soothe his soul was music. And I'm seeing a dangerous trend in today's churches. Now, I love music like everybody else.

I do. But I'm seeing a dangerous trend in our churches today when we don't want to hear the Word of God, we don't want to obey God, but we sure like to hear a song, don't we? We'll have all-night singing. We'll all have all-night prayer.

We love it. I surrendered to preach in 1995 when I was a senior in high school when I began preaching. But also, I would travel around and sing at churches.

And I got to realizing that most people would much rather have me sing than preach. And it's not because I'm a good singer or a good preacher, but it's just people like music more these days than they do preaching. And I almost wonder, see, since we've become a people that are disobedient, and I look at the people in our churches today, whenever we hear the, you know, we've got to have the praise songs playing 24-7.

If you notice now, kids, they have their iPods, especially I work at the school, and they have their iPods on all the time listening to music. We go home, we're in the car, we've got to listen to music. And we've got to have it all the time.

And there's some people that they don't feel spiritual unless they're listening to a song. They don't feel close to God unless they're listening to a song. Can we see that? My friends, the early church did not have to have a 12-piece band following them around to make them feel like, to be in the mood to praise God, to make them feel close to God.

God was real to them. Paul said, I know in whom I believe. And now we have raised up a church that cannot feel like, they feel like they cannot worship unless they have music.

And I wonder if it's because there have been spirits that have come in and they're tormenting the souls of people in our churches, and they're not soothed unless they hear a song. Can we see that? I don't know about you, but I've been to churches when all the people have wanted to do is sing. They elevate music above the Word of God.

And my friends, the music cannot save you. Only God can. Only God.

But I can see similarities between that and what is happening today. We see men, like starting out with Eli, that don't want to preach the Word of God. And therefore, that produces young people that have no regard for the Word of God.

You know, Paul warned, he said that there will come a time in the last days where people will have a form of godliness, but they will deny the power thereof. They'll look good on the outside. They'll look godly on the outside, but on the inside, there'll be no power.

There'll be no Holy Spirit. It's all a lie. Well, my friends, a generation that has a form of godliness, but denies the Holy Spirit, will produce another generation who not only does not have the Holy Spirit, but they won't even bother with having a form of godliness.

And that's what we're seeing today in our churches. And then they rebel against God. And then we see men rising up, just preaching for money and telling us what we want to hear.

And then we can see all this stuff happening and we'd much rather sing than hear the Word of God and God help us. But then there's something else, and I'm getting ready to close. Something else more tragic, or even more so tragic, that happens to Saul and is happening in today's churches.

If you all know the story that after Samuel died, Saul, he was so desperate to hear from the Lord, but he couldn't because God had turned His back on him because of his disobedience and his sins. And so what did Saul do? He did something that he would have never have done. He got so desperate because he knew that Israel was getting ready to suffer a mighty defeat.

Remember what we said when a church begins to die, they get desperate and resort to anything? Well, Saul got so desperate, he went to the witch of Endor. He went to a sorceress trying to get someone to do some divination to talk to the dead in order to get an answer. Do you all remember that story? He resorted to witchcraft.

And here was a man who was the king of Israel. And now towards the end of his life, he was trying to resort to witchcraft. And my friends, this is going on in the church today.

There are people that they notice that there's something missing from the church, but yet they don't want to follow God. They don't want to obey Him. And they don't want to be holy, but they want this feeling.

And so now they're resorting to things from the past. And this emergent church movement that is flooding in to Baptist churches and Nazarene churches and Assembly of God churches and Methodist churches, they're trying to sell people this new gospel, this new spirituality, this new mysticism that says you can tap in to this inner place inside of you. It's what we call the New Age movement.

And it's coming into our churches because people are so desperate for something, but it's not God. But we're so asleep and we're in dreamland and we will not wake up. But we need to wake up.

In 1 Timothy 4, verse 1. Paul tells Timothy, Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times there was an assumption apart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, speaking lies and hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron. My friends, we are being seduced with evil spirits and doctrines of devils in our churches today. And the reason why that is happening is because we're not standing up and preaching the Word of God.

All because we do not want to offend. In 2 Timothy 4, verse 2, it says, Preach the Word. Be instant, in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lust, they shall heap to themselves teachers having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables. Can we not see that today? My friends, it is happening. It is happening.

And we need to start praying that God would raise up a standard to fight against this. In closing, in Romans chapter 13, Romans chapter 13, starting in verse 11, I think the reason why so many people today in our churches are sleeping is because they don't realize what is going on. They don't realize the severity and the seriousness and the dangers that we face in the church and the dangers that our young people face.

It says, And that knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep. For now is our salvation nearer than we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand.

Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envy, but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lust thereof. Paul is begging them to wake up.

God is begging the church today to wake. God is begging the church to come back to Him. He is knocking on the door and He's saying, Let me in.

Do not turn to the wickedness. Do not turn to the imaginations and the worldliness and the culture that the world is trying to shove down our throats. Do not turn to the mysticism and all the New Age stuff.

Turn back to Me. In John 14, verse 15, Jesus says, If you love Me, keep My commandments. Keep His Word.

In John 14, verse 21, it says, He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me. And he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father. And I will love him and will manifest Myself to him.

If we preach the Word of God and that alone, He will manifest His presence again in our churches and we will see people begin to be saved again and lives changed. If you would bow your heads. Dear Heavenly

Father, I thank You for this time.

Heavenly Father, I pray that if there are any here that don't realize the seriousness, don't realize what's going on out there and that churches are being eat up with doctrines of devils and false prophets, I pray that You will show them and show them what they need to be praying for. Heavenly Father, wake your churches up. Wake your preachers up.

Dear Heavenly Father, send the fire of God once again. We need Elijah. We need John the Baptist to stand up.

Lord, wake up Your people. Wake us up. And turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children.

And the children back to the fathers. We thank You, Lord, for Your Holy Word. For it guides us and directs us.

We thank You, Lord, for Your Holy Spirit that guides us and directs us. Lord, I pray that we would always worship You in spirit and in truth. And I pray this church would always be a church that worships You in spirit and in truth.

And Your Word is always proclaimed here. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord God.

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