

The Battle Rages On  
September 11, 2022  
Matt. 16:13-18; Deut. 6:4-9

It was a clear Tuesday morning - I had just dropped my youngest daughter Jamey off at Crews MS - As I'm sitting at the red light at Web Ginn House Road and Brookwood HS, I hear the news - A plane has crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center in NYC.

My initial thought was THAT'S ODD - How could a plane not see those building? - Why would a plane be that low? - I got home and turned on the news just in time to see the SECOND PLANE fly directly into the SOUTH TOWER.

For a moment, like everyone watching, I SAT STILL IN SHOCK at what I had just witnessed - Then it hit me, the United States was UNDER ATTACK - the only question now was HOW MANY PLANES were going to crash today?

By 10:30 that morning, both towers HAD COLLAPSED and the Pentagon building in Washington DC WAS BURNING after a third plane had targeted it - almost 3,000 Americans had lost their lives - Over 500 more than had been killed in the surprise attack on PEARL HARBOR IN 1941.

Thus began what would soon be called, THE WAR ON TERROR - A war that continues to this day - Though some SAY IT ENDED when America PULLED IT FORCES out of Afghanistan, the reality is that there are still many around the world WHO WOULD ATTACK our country if they could - So, 21 years later, The BATTLE RAGES ON.

Yet, there is ANOTHER BATTLE that rages on today - it is a SPIRITUAL BATTLE for the **hearts and minds** of people all over this world - Satan and his allies, the World and the the flesh, are continuing a RELENTLESS WAR against THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

To say the battle HAS INTENSIFIED over the past few years here in America would be AN UNDERSTATEMENT.  
In America, the battle ground has become OUR SCHOOLS - and our ENTERTAINMENT - our LEGISLATORS - attacks have included the

definitions of FAMILY & MARRIAGE - how we DEFINE GENDER - and **sadly, even MANY CHURCHES have become fields of battle.**

ONE OF THE EARLY VOLLEYS of recent history, WAS the **legalization of Abortion** by the 1973 Supreme Court decision of Roe V Wade - Since that decision, GAY MARRIAGE has been legalized - The homosexual lifestyle has been NORMALIZED BY HOLLYWOOD.

Today, teenagers and adults alike have BECOME BORED with normal sexual attractions - They have turned to “**Alternative lifestyles**” - In teenage circles it has become COOL TO BE QUEER - as if they have discovered SOMETHING NEW.

Listen church, these battles are NOTHING NEW for the people of God - just read your Bible - ALL OF THESE practices were POPULAR AMONG THE PAGAN people surrounding Israel - So much so that God prohibited them in the Law of Moses 4,000 years ago!

But American CULTURE THAT FOR SO LONG was somewhat sheltered from THESE LIFESTYLES - Now WE TREMBLE as if they are something new - There is NOTHING NEW when it comes to the DEPRAVITY OF PEOPLE.

The latest BATTLE GROUND has been GENDER CONFUSION - We have now had to separate GENDER FROM SEXUALITY - Today, we are asking kids in schools to CHOOSE THEIR PRONOUN - Maybe the reason they are confused is because NO ONE HAS HAD THE COURAGE to look them in the eye and tell them what they are!

I could go on and on - As a matter of fact, I could really scare you today QUOTING STATISTICS & POLLS - But, do I really need to do that - I think everyone here is aware of the BATTLE AGAINST BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY RAGES all around us today.

This morning, I want to give you SOME HOPE, NOT MORE FEAR - I want to give you A BATTLE PLAN - not a PANIC ATTACK - This world has always been a PROFANE PLACE - there is nothing new under the sun!

Yes, for years we were SOMEWHAT SHELTERED in this country - Because of the GREAT REVIVALS of the 17 & 1800's, Biblical truth was somewhat

WOVEN INTO the fabric of our country - Don't misunderstand, we were NEVER A CHRISTIAN NATION, as some would like to believe - **but we have been a nation that was GREATLY INFLUENCE by Biblical thought and teaching.**

Though most in our nation may not have been BORN-AGAIN FOLLOWERS of Christ, they were restricted to a degree in their PUBLIC BEHAVIOR by some ingrained BIBLICAL BOUNDARIES.

Though privately many have practiced UNGODLY BEHAVIORS, they were NOT FREE TO FLAUNT them in public - today that has changed - Now it is IN YOUR FACE - Those biblical boundaries NO LONGER STAND.

Yes, for American Christians the WALLS HAVE BEEN BREACHED and the battle has arrived at OUR DOORSTEP - IN REACTION to this new reality, Christians are experiencing a wide array of emotional reactions - they include FEAR - ANGER - SADNESS - REGRET - GUILT - and HOPELESSNESS.

Many are now motivated TO ACT - they want to do something before the Country they grew up in NO LONGER EXIST!

Some have turned to POLITICS as a way of fighting the battle - others have BEGUN PROTESTING & BOYCOTTING - some have chosen to FOLLOW THIS LEADER or that LEADER - A FEW even WRONGLY FEEL the answer is in VIOLENCE - It is NOT!

OTHERS have taken a different path - Their answer is to ISOLATE & ESCAPE - They have turned to private schools or homeschools as a means of AVOIDING THE INFLUENCES of public schools - they have moved to gated communities & safer neighborhoods - At least neighborhoods they PERCEIVE to be safe!

**Some FIGHT, while some RUN** - and let me say upfront, there IS SOME WISDOM in both of these approaches - each of us must decide how we will handle THE BATTLE of our CHANGING CULTURE - but, know this: THIS WAR is nothing new - We have been FIGHTING IT since Cain violently killed his brother Abel.

For this reason, God has PUT IN TO PLACE some safe guards to protect you and your family FROM THE BATTLE that rages all around us - God has a BATTLE PLAN - He has a PLAN OF ACTION devised to fight the enemy at our doorstep.

This morning I want us TO EXAMINE His plan for WINNING THE BATTLE in this HOSTILE WORLD - I want to give you 2 Words that I believe best describes His Battle Plan for you and I.

Our 2 Words are **PROTECTION - PREPARATION** - Let's take these words one at the time and remind ourselves of how God wants us to fight the battles that rage around us!

Our FIRST word is **PROTECTION** - GOD'S PLAN was never to save us and TAKE US OUT of this world - He wants us to live in THIS WORLD - He just doesn't want us to LIVE LIKE THIS WORLD LIVES - We are a **CALLED OUT PEOPLE** - GOD has saved us that we might LIVE DIFFERENTLY!

Because we have to live IN THIS WORLD, we are subjected to ITS ATTACKS! - The World will try to invade our lives on many fronts - This world can be a VICIOUS, PAINFUL, YET ATTRACTIVE PLACE.

And, no matter HOW LOOSELY WE ATTACH ourselves to this world, Satan **can and will attack us** - He will TEMPTS US - he will SEEK TO PULL us into his traps - and with all this going on, we need SOME PROTECTION.

We need a place of REFUGE & HELP - This is why God created this community of believers that the Bible calls THE CHURCH.

The first place that we see the CHURCH MENTIONED in the Bible is Matthew 16 - There we read, **13 When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" 14 So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."**

**17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.**

Jesus had traveled with his disciples to northern region of Israel to a town called Caesarea Philippi - If you go to Israel on our next trip, we will visit this incredible place - It was a place at the time associated with PAGAN WORSHIP.

It is there Jesus decides to QUIZ HIS DISCIPLES - After about 2 1/2 years with Him, have they yet figured out who He is? - He begins by asking them who others say that He is? - They replied, **"Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."**

Then, Jesus looks at them and asks the MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION that all of us have to answer one day, **"But who do you say that I am?"** - Have you every answered that question? - Your DESTINY for all eternity depends on your ANSWER to that one question!

Guess what? - Peter got the answer just right! - **16 Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."** - A+ Peter - God has REVEALED TO YOU the truth of who Jesus is!

I am so thankful that God REVEALED TO ME that truth about Jesus - Way back some 50 years ago, I MADE THE SAME CONFESSION that Peter made, **"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."** - and my life has never been the same.

ONE DAY God will welcome me into Heaven - And it won't be because I have been a GOOD GUY - No, it will be based on my RECOGNITION of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God - I have been accepted by God TOTALLY BASED on my trust in the work of Jesus on the Cross of Calvary!

At that moment I BECAME A PART of God's Church - the greek word for church is **ekklēsia** - it means "**Called out ones**" - originally this was not a RELIGIOUS TERM - it was used to speak of a group of people who were called out of their homes into the public for a specific purpose.

Jesus takes this term and applies it to HIS FOLLOWERS - they were going to be CALLED OUT of this world to follow him - They are were going to be called out from their HOMES & FAMILIES TO A NEW PURPOSE - It would be **God's ekklesia - God's church!**

God did not call you OUT OF THIS WORLD to leave you all alone, ISOLATED to fend for yourself in the SPIRITUAL BATTLE - NO! - He placed you in a NEW FAMILY - He made you a part of a NEW ASSOCIATION - The Church of Jesus Christ - The HOME for His followers!

But notice what Jesus says about THIS SPECIAL GROUP, His church - **the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it** - The gates of a City were the place where the LEADERS WOULD GATHER - it was the MEETING PLACE OF INFLUENCE - the place where POLICY IS DECIDED - Where plans are DECIDED.

Here Jesus is saying that HIS CHURCH would be protected from the INFLUENCES & POLICIES & PLANS OF HELL!

Here, in God's Church, His people would have a **PLACE OF REFUGE from the powers and plans of Satan!** - The church would be a PLACE OF PROTECTION from the battle raging around us!

Does this mean that EVERYTHING TODAY called "a church" is God's church? - Absolutely not! - Throughout the history of the church, factions of it (**sometimes large factions**) have BECOME CORRUPT - but God has always had HIS TRUE CHURCH!

A place where the He is Worshiped in Spirit and Truth - A place where His WORD IS LOVED & TAUGHT - A place where true followers are filled with the power of the HOLY SPIRIT - where His people loved God and loved each other!

Are there places that GO BY THE NAME CHURCH where the Spirit of God no longer dwells? - where the Word of God is **compromised & violated & ignored**? - Absolutely! - And these are DANGEROUS PLACES - These are places where people are DECEIVED & DAMAGED!

But, the true church of God is a PLACE OF REFUGE - A place of safety and security - A place where God's people find STRENGTH & COMFORT - a place where people are LOVED & VALUED - a place where GRACE ABOUNDS & SIN is overcome!

Church is not a SUNDAY MORNING THEATER - it is not a BIBLE CLASS we attend once or twice a week - NO, CHURCH is a group of believers who have been CALLED OUT by Jesus to LIVE LIFE TOGETHER - to love each other - to protect each other - to encourage one another - and to hold each other accountable to the truth of Scripture.

The Church is a group of people who PRIORITIZE THEIR COMMITMENT to each other - as the writer of Hebrews says, **Hebrew 10:24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.**

Listen church, we can't stir up love and good works in each other if we are NOT AROUND EACH OTHER - Here's my question for you this morning - **How high on your priority list is being a part of church each week?**

Let me let you in on a secret: The World, your Flesh and Satan will do everything they can to keep you away from Church! - from the PHYSICAL GATHERING TOGETHER of His followers.

The world will put SPORTS & ACTIVITIES in your way - The world will put FAMILY TIME in your way - Satan will tell you that you just need to SLEEP IN and get some rest.

You need to catch up on those chores - You need to spend the day at the Lake - You just need to KEEP A SAFE DISTANCE from those people! - I can go on and on WITH THE REASONS people find TO MISS CHURCH!

When I was a kid, my parents PURCHASED A LOT on Lake Hartwell - We weren't rich - My parents were just at the right place at the right time to get a really great deal on a lake lot.

There were 4 or 5 other families from our church IN CLARKSTON who also had lots on the Lake - each side by side - During the late spring and summer, we would go to the lake almost every weekend - We would go up on Friday afternoon and come home . . . on Saturday night! - NOT SUNDAY, like everyone else!

As a kids I hated it - Everyone else came home on Sunday night, but my dad FELT IT WAS IMPORTANT that we be at church on Sundays - So we came home - When I was 11 & 12 years old, I hated it! - I just didn't understand why OUR FAMILY had to come home and go to church!

A few years later, I gave my life to Christ - During my teenage years, I came to understand my parents and their commitment to church - While so many of my friends were CHASING THE THINGS OF THE WORLD, I was being **protected & encouraged** by my church family!

And it was ALL BECAUSE I HAD a mom & dad who understood the IMPORTANCE of being at church!

Can I be very PERSONAL & VULNERABLE for a moment? - My youngest daughter Jamey, **played high level travel softball** - And there were some Sundays when she played in the mornings and missed church - I coached the team so that I could control this as much as I could.

Unfortunately, I could not always avoid it - When we had a game on Sunday mornings, I did not go, but we would let Jamey play - Looking back, DO I HAVE SOME REGRETS that I let her go and play? - Yes, some - But we always tried to make sure she was here on Sunday nights - or at Youth group on Wednesday nights.

Why am I telling you this? - Because I want you to know that I UNDERSTAND THE STRUGGLE! - But I also want you to know that it should be a struggle - It should not be easy for us to SKIP CHURCH for things that seem important now, but in the eternal perspective, are not at all.



Am I talking about LEGALISM? - Am I equating Sunday as the NEW SABBATH DAY? - AM I SAYING you have to be at church every week TO DO YOUR DUTY? - Absolutely not! - But I am saying that our children need to know that CHURCH MATTERS - that it is VERY IMPORTANT to their safety and well-being - They need to know that it is a HIGH PRIORITY for our family!

Yes, you can worship God at home - alone or with just your family - but understand, **that can not replace meeting regularly with your church family!**

When I was young, REGULAR CHURCH attendance consisted of Sunday morning, Sunday evenings & Wednesday evenings - Today, people feel they attend church regularly if they are in attendance a couple of times a month on Sunday mornings!

Do you see a CORRELATION between FALLING CHURCH ATTENDANCE and the state of MORAL FAILURE in our country? - There is a reason why being a part of a church is so important - it is a PLACE OF PROTECTION!

Our SECOND WORD this morning is **PREPARATION** - God's purpose in creating family was to provide a PLACE TO PREPARE you children to face a HOSTILE WORLD!

Let's start with THIS UNDERSTANDING - When your child is born, they are like a PEICE OF CLAY - they are SOFT & MOLDABLE - and SATAN KNOWS THIS - **And HE IS HOPING you will leave the molding up to him!**

This is why it is absolutely crazy to think you should just sit back and let your children FIND THEIR OWN WAY - Trust me, Satan and the World are NOT SITTING BACK letting your young child become what GOD DESIGNED them to be!

No, Satan is doing everything he can to INFLUENCE your child's thinking and behavior - he is working hard to CONFUSE THEM - His goal is to DECEIVE THEM - His plan is to PUSH THEM away from the truths of the Bible.

Do you think a teenage girl just wakes up one day and decides she wants to be a boy WHEN GOD CREATED her a girl? - No way - something or someone has INFLUENCED THAT CHILD'S THINKING - a person or an experience or a movie (or some combination) has MOLDED THAT CHILD'S THINKING - they have been PUSHED IN A DIRECTION that is opposite of what God designed them to be.

Your child needs you TO MOLD THEM in Godly directions - Their SINFUL FLESH will go right along with the SINFUL ATTRACTIONS of the World - UNLESS You are there to influence them in a GODLY DIRECTION! - And you must do it with the same force that is being applied in the opposite direction!

We need to PROACTIVELY MOLD, SHAPE & INFLUENCE our children before we send them out into this DANGEROUS WORLD! - The job of parents is the TEACH & GUIDE A CHILD towards godliness before the world can CORRUPT THEM into ungodliness.

If you are going to PROTECT YOUR CHILDREN from this insane world, you have to PREPARE THEM for what lies ahead - Some parents mistakenly think they CAN ISOLATE their children from the world - and I would agree that you can do this FOR A VERY SHORT SEASON of their lives.

But sooner or later they are going to have to FACE THE WORLD with all of it TEMPTATIONS & CHALLENGES to their faith - What are you doing to PREPARE THEM to face those challenges?

I don't think the answer lies in ISOLATION - According to the Bible the answer LIES IN PREPARATION - So God has JUST THE VEHICLE to do just that - GOD'S answer is family!

Family is a place to PROACTIVELY PREPARE a child for the world they must one day survive in - Let's spend our last few minutes together examining how we can do this.

In Deut. 6, God said the following, **1 "Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, 2 "that you may fear the**

**LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. 3 "Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the LORD God of your fathers has promised you--'a land flowing with milk and honey.'4 "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! 5 "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. 6 "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.**

Does it sound like God wants us to take a PASSIVE APPROACH to parenting? - NO WAY - He wants us to ACTIVELY GUIDE our children in the paths of righteousness!

And notice this is a JOB FOR Parents and Grandparents! - Just because you have RAISED YOUR CHILDREN, your job is not done!

I want to make 3 quick observations:

First, **As parents & grandparents, we must live it before we can pass it on!** - You can't TEACH & INFLUENCE your children in a direction you are NOT FIRST TRAVELING yourself - Kids are smart & perceptive - they are not interested in our words if they DON'T MATCH OUR ACTIONS!

If the two don't match up, they will DISREGARD YOUR WORDS very quickly! - Don't preach to them about LOVING GOD with all your heart, if loving God is NOT EVIDENT in your life!

God's Word must be WORKING IN YOUR LIFE if your child is going to BELIEVE THEM! - If you are not LIVING IT OUT at home, then don't EXPECT your child to LIVE IT OUT EITHER!

One of my BIGGEST PRIORITIES as a parent was to be the EXACT SAME PERSON at home as I was at Church - I knew if the two did not match up, my kids would SEE THROUGH ME - And my children wouldn't listen to me! - You have to LIVE IT BEFORE you can pass it on!

Second, our job as parents is to **teach them diligently to our children** - What are we to teach diligently to our children? - The Word of God - The truths of the Scripture! - and again, it is HARD TO TEACH what we do not know!

This phrase **“to teach them diligently”** is actually one word in the Hebrew **“SHAW NAN”**- it means **to sharpen** - In the CONTEXT here it get translated “to teach them diligently” - God is commanding us to SHARPEN OUR CHILDREN - Again, the idea is TO INFLUENCE & MOLD them through REPEATED LESSONS!

Have you ever SHARPENED A KNIFE - it is the SAME MOTIONS REPEATED over and over! - This is how we teach our children - WE REPEAT the same truths over and over - OUR LESSONS are repeated time after time - The KEY TO LEARNING anything is repetition!

But, one of the KEYS TO SHARPENING a knife is not to sharpen it TOO LONG at any one sitting - In other words, I sharpen a knife OFTEN IN SHORT SESSIONS! - I don't spend 30 minutes at one sitting!

This is true with TEACHING MY CHILDREN - I don't spend an hour LECTURING MY CHILD - No, I spend just a few moments teaching them, BUT I DO IT OFTEN! - Or at least, as often as is needed.

The younger the child is the SHORTER & MORE OFTEN REPEATED is the lesson! - If I am trying to teach a 2 year old not to RUN IN THE STREET, I'm not going to spend an hour talking about the PHYSICS OF GETTING HIT BY A 5,000 lbs. automobile!

No, I am going to remind the 10 times a day to LOOK BEFORE THEY CROSS the street - I am going to make them HOLD MY HAND each time we cross the parking lot or the street - I am going to KEEP THEM CLOSE and POINT OUT WHEN a car is coming down the street!

If I am teaching my 15 year old about the DANGERS OF ALCOHOL, that might involve a LONGER CONVERSATION on the way to a ballgame or on trip - Notice, **I said a conversation** - NOT A LECTURE! - I'm not sure lecturing is ever a great way of teaching a child.

Notice the language God uses here: **and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.**

Teaching and training a child is ACCOMPLISHED BY SPENDING time with them - Here is my 3 and final observation: **You have to be present in your child's life if you are going to mold and influence them. You can't do it if you are not there!**

We need to teach like JESUS TAUGHT - He SPENT 3 YEARS LIVING with his disciples - He taught them as they walked together through life! - HE REINFORCE His lessons time and time again.

Very little of our teaching as parents happens in a CLASSROOM - it happens as we LIVE LIFE with our children!

So, WHO HAS the greatest influence in your child's life? - Simple: **Whoever is spending the MOST TIME with them!** - THAT PERSON is the one doing the MOST TEACHING & MOLDING - So, who is it in your child's life? - Is it TV? - Is it the latest INTERNET INFLUENCER - Is it THEIR FRIENDS? - Is it some SCHOOL TEACHER or daycare worker? - Or is it YOU?

**WE HAVE TO BE THERE - We have to be REAL; we have to be CONSISTENT; and we have to be PRESENT!**

Let's not leave the MOLDING OF OUR CHILDREN to the World - Let's be INTENTIONAL in our TEACHING!

Let me close with this thought - Family and Church are a powerful combination in a child's life - They go together - they are partners that WORK TOGETHER to PREPARE & PROTECT your child.

Let's keep church a PRIORITY and understand the PROTECTION it provides for us and our families - Let's be the GREATEST INFLUENCE we can be in our child's life - Don't leave THEIR FUTURE to chance!

Let's Pray.