

MAKING HAVOC OF THE CHURCH

Acts 8:3

Sermon by Donald Townsley

INTRODUCTION

1. In Acts 8:3 we read that Saul "*made havoc of the church*" (The ASV says: "*Saul laid waste the church*").
2. After Saul's conversion at Damascus, those who heard him asked, "*Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem? . . .*" --Acts 9:21 (The ASV: "*Is not this he that in Jerusalem made havoc of them that called on this name?*")
3. Gal. 1: 23 -- *But they had heard only, that he which persecuted us in times past now preached the faith which once he destroyed*". . . (ASV: "*preached the faith of which he once made havoc*").
4. One has to come to the OBVIOUS CONCLUSION that to make "*havoc of the church*" in these passages is to destroy the faith and those who believed.
5. This is what Paul was doing before he obeyed the gospel.
6. Today there are many who are laboring to make spiritual havoc of the church.
7. In almost every congregation there are some internal agents laboring to make "*havoc of the church*".
8. There are many ways by which havoc is made of the church today.
9. Let us look at some of these ways.

I. THE SIN OF NEGLECT IS MAKING HAVOC OF THE CHURCH

1. Jeremiah said, "*Cursed be he that doeth the work of Jehovah NEGLIGENTLY*" (ASV) Jeremiah 48:10.
2. The Hebrew writer said, "*How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation*" --Heb. 2:3
3. The second recorded sin in the church was NEGLECT-- Acts 6:1.
4. There is no sin so common or universal as that of NEGLECT -- James 4: 17.
5. The sin of NEGLECT is pointed out to us very clearly in Matt. 25:
 - (1) The five foolish virgins were lost through NEGLECT -- Matt. 25: 1 - 13.
 - (2) The one talent man was lost through NEGLECT -- Matt. 25: 14 - 30.
 - (3) The Judgment -- those on the left were lost through NEGLECT -- Matt. 25: 41 -46.
6. Churches NEGLECT:
 - (1) Song service -- Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19.
 - (2) Teaching All the counsel of God -- Acts 20:27.
 - (3) To restore the weak -- Gal. 6:1; James 5: 19 - 20.
 - (4) To discipline the ungodly and the disobedient -- 2 Thess. 3:6.
7. Christians NEGLECT:
 - (1) To pray -- I Thess. 5:17; Lk. 18:1.
 - (2) To Study -- 2 Tim. 3:15; I Pet. 2:2
 - (3) To Assemble -- Heb. 10:25
 - (4) To follow the example of Jesus -- I Pet. 2:21.
 - (5) Their obligations to the church.

II. A LACK OF SPIRITUALITY MAKES HAVOC OF THE CHURCH.

1. When elders, preachers, deacons, and teachers are NOT spiritual, the church cannot be spiritual.

2. The nature of Spiritual men:
 - (1) Spiritual men are men who are "*led of the Spirit*" -- Gal. 5:18; 5:16; 5:25 -- Their lives are governed by the revelation of the Spirit, the New Testament.
 - (2) They bear the fruit of the Spirit in their lives -- Gal. 5: 22 -23.
 - (3) The Spiritual state is reached by a diligent study of the Word of God, prayer, and work -- I Pet. 2:2; Heb. 5: 12 - 14; I Thess. 5:17; I Cor. 15: 58 -- This state is maintained by continued obedience.
 - (4) Paul says the Corinthians were not "*spiritual*" but "*carnal*" -- I Cor. 3:1.
 1. They were "carnal" because they were continuing to live like men of the world -- I Cor. 3:3.
3. Carnal men, whether they be Elders, Preachers, or members in general, become enamored with worldly wisdom and men's devices to draw crowds -- instead of using the gospel of Christ to make sinners realize they're lost and headed for Hell -- Rom. 1:16.
4. Carnal men are always seeking "some new thing" or "gimmick" to attract numbers and to compete with the denominations.
5. Carnal men invite people to become Christians without repentance and its fruit:
 - (1) Some are attempting to make divorce and remarriage a matter of convenience.
 - (2) People who are living in adultery are being baptized, and their continued co-habitation is receiving the blessing of many.
6. Carnal men are always wanting to have a "dialogue" or a "summit" or some such meeting, for the purpose of compromise among dissenting brethren.
7. Carnal men want to take a POSITIVE APPROACH with the gospel so it will be more appealing to the World.
8. Spiritual men in the New Testament did not use human wisdom to draw men; they did not compromise with ERROR, and their message was not always positive:
 - (1) I Cor. 2:1 - 5
 - (2) Gal. 2:5
 - (3) Jude 3
 - (4) 2 Tim. 4:2
 - (5) Matt. 15:9

III. A LACK OF RESPECT FOR DIVINE AUTHORITY MAKES HAVOC OF THE CHURCH

1. We must have divine authority for ALL we do -- Matt. 28:18; James 4:12; Eph. 1: 22 -23; Heb. 1:1 - 2; Matt. 17:5
2. There was a time in the church when a statement from the Word of God would settle a matter between brethren -- this is not true anymore.
3. Today, some do not believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures -- I Cor. 2:13.
4. Today many don't believe we have to have Authority for all we do.
5. Many are involved in all kinds of unscriptural projects.
6. Many people's LACK of respect for authority shows up in the organization and function of the church:
 - (1) Many believe the church can do its work through other organizations -- this has made HAVOC OF THE CHURCH ACROSS THE LAND.

- (2) Many churches have no Elders and WANT NONE.
 1. They "run" the local church with "the business meeting" for years.
 2. Many decide every issue by "voting".

IV. CONFORMING TO THE WORLD IS MAKING HAVOC OF THE CHURCH

1. Paul said, "*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God*" -- Rom. 12:2.
2. Many children of God are RULED today by the Prince of the air, the god of this world -- Eph. 2:2; 2 Cor. 4:4 -- in their LANGUAGE, DRESS, CONDUCT, and PRINCIPLES OF RIGHT AND WRONG.
3. Moral Decay is found everywhere.
4. The word of God is being blasphemed by Children of God on every hand -- Tit. 2:5:
 - (1) Children don't obey their parents -- Eph. 6: 1- 4.
 - (2) Wives don't obey their husbands -- Tit. 2:5.
 - (3) Husbands don't love their wives -- Eph. 5:25.
 - (4) Parents don't discipline their children -- Eph. 6:4.
5. Christians cannot be DISTINGUISHED from those of the IMMORAL WORLD by their:
 - (1) Dress
 - (2) Habits
 - (3) Company
 - (4) Family life
 - (5) Religious claims
6. Churches don't discipline the ungodly -- I Cor. 5: 1 - 5

CONCLUSION

1. How can these destructive forces in the church be changed?
2. First, we are going to have to convert some cowardly, faith-hearted, untaught elders, preachers and church members.
3. We are going to have to come back to the authority of God's Word for all we do -- Col. 3:17.

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