

## JAMES 3:1-12

### HOW TO DESTROY YOUR CHURCH

“Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.

“How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.”<sup>1</sup>

**T**he title of the message may cause you to respond that there is no need for a primer for the destruction of a church. Certainly, secularists and bureaucratic functionaries do a pretty good job of assaulting the Christian Faith, with some success at destroying churches and the faith of God’s people. However, I contend that professed Christians do a far more effective job of destroying churches than have all the antagonists we would usually suspect of such efforts.

Few of us who name the Name of Christ have ever lived up to the responsibilities imposed by the name we bear. Our Lord commanded us to love one another, and though we know the words, we don’t know the melody. We still go to church, instead of being the church. We are careful to live by rules trumpeted by church leaders, all the while ignoring obedience to the few commands of the Master. We are comfortable saying prayers, but we don’t pray. James’ concern is that Christians can become more like the world than like the Father. Because we live in a world of evil, without diligence, the people of God will more likely reflect the world in which we live than reflecting Him who is our Father.

Throughout the Word of God are warnings against abusing speech. Though we occasionally encounter these passages, we don’t often embrace them. Paul warned in the Ephesian encyclical, “Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving” [EPHESIANS 5:4]. These are sins usually associated with speech for which few make any excuse. However, the same Apostle warned, “You must put ... away ... anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk” [COLOSSIANS 3:8]. Here, he named sins that are all associated with the mouth. The warning iterates his caution in another place. “Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear... Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from you, along with all malice” [EPHESIANS 4:29, 31].

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Our speech reveals a great deal about the condition of the heart. Jesus warned, “Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander” [MATTHEW 15:19]. Then He added, “These are what defile a person” [MATTHEW 15:20a].

As James reaches the midpoint of his missive to Jewish Christians, he turns his attention to speech within the assembly of the faithful. Ever practical, James is concerned that the believers provide a powerful witness among the pagans, fortifying their testimony with righteous lives that reflect the presence of the Living Saviour. Nothing shows the presence of Christ more consistently nor more constantly than how we speak. This is especially true when we are speaking of or to fellow believers. Join me in exploring this biblical warning for us who are Christians to watch what we say and how we say it.

**A LUST FOR POWER WILL DESTROY A CHURCH** — “Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body.”

Lord Acton voiced a biblical truth in secular terms when he wrote Bishop Creighton, “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Power is seductive, and just because we are Christians, we are not exempt from the heady allure of power. The central theme of this passage focuses on power and especially on providing a caution against abusing power. The power of a teacher is first in view; then, quite naturally the generalised consideration of the power of the tongue heaves into view. Teachers have inordinate power. It is easy to dismiss the power of political leaders, but even a casual review of the history of mankind demonstrates the potential for evil that lies within the grasp of national leaders.

A failed Austrian architect rises to power, and because the populace does not object to his continual grasp for more power, he precipitates a horrifying holocaust on all Europe, drawing in nations far removed from that continent. A Georgian peasant assumes power in Russia and after ascending to power visits unprecedented terror on the Soviet Republic. History is littered with the names such as Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, Mao Tse Tung—totalitarians all, who were intoxicated with power and destroyed countless millions of lives in pursuit of the acquisition of more power.

The great problem with political power is that unlike God’s power, it is capricious. God always leads man to what is good for man and what brings glory to the Name of the Living God. Political power serves the narrow interests of those in power, and those interests can change quite rapidly. Political power is always exercised at the expense of others; it almost always is compelled to rely on compromise rather than principle. Solomon traded away entire villages—inhabitants and all—to pay debts. The British government reneged on promises to France and Czechoslovakia in an attempt to buy peace with Hitler. The United States and Canadian governments have made and broken multiple treaties with natives, excusing their perfidy because it was in the interest of the nation. Political power must not be equated with the cause of Christ.

In similar fashion, Christians can become intoxicated with power, imagining that through imposing their will over the life of the assembly that they are doing the work of God. One of the great plagues sapping the energy of the churches of our Lord is the usurpation of power by people who have no accountability to anyone save their own interests. A proverb of Solomon is worthy of our consideration in light of the cautionary statements of James. Solomon observed, “There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, as it were an error proceeding from the ruler: folly is set in many high places, and the rich sit in a low place. I have seen slaves on horses, and princes walking on the ground like slaves” [ECCLESIASTES 10:5-7].

According to his observation, a ruler may (in fact seems often to actually do so) appoint an incompetent individual to a position of authority while ignoring imminently qualified individuals. Thus, slaves ride on horses while princes walk on the ground like slaves. The result of poor judgement in appointing leadership is sorrow for the nation.

People unsuited for leadership often rise to a position of incompetence. Solomon actually provides us with an ancient statement anticipating the Peter Principle. This is certainly the case among the people of God in far too many instances. People that are divinely equipped to serve God's holy people are shunted into positions where they are incapable of making full use of their gifts and calling while individuals of lesser qualification other than overweening ambition arrogate power to themselves.

Inevitably, within a church, people who commandeer power for themselves will argue that they are acting for the good of the congregation. However, they also tend to conflate their personal desires with the will of God. Perhaps they simply enjoy a sense of power over others, or perhaps they seek to settle old scores, or they may even want to halt progress toward one goal in order to redirect church interest in another direction. It is possible that their desire to control what is going on blinds them to the work God would otherwise have them do. Regardless of motive, advancing oneself rather than waiting on God injures the work of the Kingdom.

Without question, those who teach—whether as pastors or as Bible teachers—exercise considerable influence within a congregation. Unfortunately, selecting teachers is often an exercise in pragmatism rather than a demonstration of spiritual perspicuity. Teachers are more often appointed out of desperation to maintain a program than accepted to teach because God has equipped them to teach. Whenever a Sunday School class or a Bible study class requires a teacher, a committee casts about until they find someone willing to fill the role. The entire exercise is designed to maintain what is in place rather than advancing the work of the Kingdom. If the situation prevailing within Bible classes and Sunday School classes is dire, then the situation for the Sunday morning instruction from the pulpit is positively desperate.

Tragically, many who occupy the sacred desk are unsuited for the divine task. Writing Titus, Paul stated that a primary qualification of those who would be appointed as an elder among the churches was to “be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it” [TITUS 1:9]. Timothy, as overseer of the Ephesian congregation, was to devote himself to teaching [see 1 TIMOTHY 4:13]. He was also charged to entrust the corpus of sacred doctrine “to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” [2 TIMOTHY 2:2]. Indeed, “the Lord’s servant must ... [be] able to teach” [2 TIMOTHY 2:24].

James is not disputing what Paul has written, but rather he is anticipating the dangers inherent in appointment to the divine office of a teacher when a church has become politicised rather than acting under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Those who teach bear an awesome responsibility for the welfare of all who sit under their teaching. Teachers are responsible before God for the spiritual welfare of those who follow their teaching and they are responsible before God to ensure that what is taught is healthful for those who listen.

Undoubtedly, there is a harsh judgement awaiting those who teach. This truth should motivate us who teach to ensure that our doctrine is sound and that we speak the truth in love. However, there is a more immediate judgement that James has in view. In light of his letter to this point, stressing as it does practical Christianity, it seems that James is cautioning that the world watches those who teach, holding them to a strict standard of living up to what they teach. Church leaders can either turn people toward Christ or turn them from God. It depends in no small measure on what they teach and how they live.

During my years of service before the Master, I have observed a number of individuals who averred a desire to teach. While I am grateful for a number of individuals who gave evidence of the Master's call, I sorrowfully say that my more common observation is that many had inferior motives for pushing themselves forward than would be anticipated in those directed by the Spirit of God to instruct His people. Too often, individuals spoke out of their prejudice promoting their own self-interests, though there were always those individuals who sought the mind of the Master. I quietly determined that those individuals who demonstrated an agenda would no longer be invited to address the congregation. However, some were determined to promote themselves and I have found it necessary to oppose them.

While it is a serious matter for any person to lust for power, such ambition tolerated within the community of faith will destroy God's people. Selfish ambition is soundly condemned in God's holy people. God promises "eternal life to those who by perseverance in good works seek glory and honour and immortality." However, that same Word warns that there remains only "wrath and anger to those who live in selfish ambition" [**ROMANS 2:7, 8 NET BIBLE**].

Writing the Corinthians Christians, Paul spoke of his fear that when he came to them he would find "quarrelling, jealousy, intense anger, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance, and disorder" [**2 CORINTHIANS 12:20 NET BIBLE**]. Selfish ambition was ranked among the most serious of spiritual deficits. Those professed Christians who preached in an effort to injure Paul, did so "from selfish ambition, not sincerely, because they think they can cause trouble for me in my imprisonment" [**PHILIPPIANS 1:17 NET BIBLE**]. Clearly, the lust for personal power over the people of God is nowhere commended within the Word of God.

To the Philippians, Paul wrote, "If there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort provided by love, any fellowship in the Spirit, any affection or mercy, complete my joy and be of the same mind, by having the same love, being united in spirit, and having one purpose. Instead of being motivated by selfish ambition or vanity, each of you should, in humility, be moved to treat one another as more important than yourself" [**PHILIPPIANS 2:1-3 NET BIBLE**]. Obviously, he was concerned lest members within the congregation should be motivated by a lust for personal power which would result in harm for the Body.

Soon after the words of our text, James warned those to whom he writes, "If you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice" [**JAMES 3:14-16**]. Whenever we bring our agenda into the work of the congregation, we dishonour the Master. Whenever we begin to seek our own glory we expose the people of God to great harm. We promote our own interests at the expense of God's glory and to the detriment of His church.

Ambition is a good thing, if it is godly ambition. However, the ambition that focuses on the self leads to disaster for the work of Christ. If we wish to have ambition that is approved by God, let us seek ambition to live godly and holy lives. Let us be ambitious to promote the glory of God and the welfare of His people. Let us be eager to advance the cause of His Kingdom. Such ambition reflects a healthy focus on Christ and His glory rather than focusing on what we want or the momentary plaudits of men.

**UNRESTRAINED SPEECH DESTROYS A CHURCH** — "If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things."

James highlighted the grave danger inherent in the pursuit of personal power within the assembly. Now, he teaches us that drive to acquire authority within the church is revealed through unrestrained speech. Not only do those madly pursuing power say whatever is necessary to maintain power, but their failure to control their speech exposes the even greater malady of a life that is no longer under control of the Spirit.

The pursuit of power is addictive, and the lives of those abusing speech are contaminated. Power mongers are miserable when they are unable to hold power. They cannot think of anything save how to seize power. They are restless and relentless in stirring up trouble, all the while seeking to appear as though they are innocent of all wrongdoing. Jude undoubtedly had precisely such people in mind when he wrote that dark condemnation early in his brief missive.

People such as these “defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones. But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you.’ But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively. Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam’s error and perished in Korah’s rebellion. These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever” [JUDE 8-12].

The bit used to control horses is small compared to the horse itself, and yet that bit may either be used to direct the strength of the horse to benefit others or be misused to destroy others. The rudder of a ship is small in comparison to the entire ship; but that rudder may either guide the ship to the lee and safety before a storm threatens or it may steer the ship into grave danger. Just so, those who are charged with responsibility over a church, or those who have assumed responsibility illicitly, may either nurture or corrode the Body. Those who teach must be under proper authority or they will quickly destroy the work of building that has taken many years.

A situation occurred in a former congregation when a man was compelled to step aside from a recent appointment to leadership because of disarray in his family. He did so with great reluctance and only because considerable pressure was exerted against him. However, he seethed, more because of the loss of power than any other reason. He fumed at the perceived injustice, voicing his discontent to anyone who would listen, repeatedly issuing veiled threats.

Surreptitiously, like a snake slithering through tall grass, that angry man fomented rebellion against the leadership of the congregation until one evening during a congregational meeting a small, but influential cabal levelled multiple serious charges against the leadership. The implications of the charges, had they been true, would have been serious, and yet that man insisted that he had nothing to do with the angry attack. His lust for power led otherwise good people to say some of the most deliberately hurtful things imaginable, and the consequences arising from his drive for power will loom over the work of Christ for years to come.

Kenneth Wuest, in his translation emphasises the tight connection between the unrestrained tongue and the restless attitude that is always seeking to promote oneself. He writes, “The tongue ... is a restless, unstable evil, full of lethal poison” [JAMES 3:8]. Then he notes, “Where jealousy and contentiousness are, there, in that place, are restlessness and instability and every base deed” [JAMES 3:16].<sup>2</sup> The lust for power leads people to destabilise the work of God, saying many hurtful things to gain or hold onto power.

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<sup>2</sup> Kenneth S. Wuest, **The New Testament: An Expanded Translation** (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI 1997, 1961)

Where the Spirit of the Lord reigns, there is peace. The spirits that are not under the rule of the Master wander through waterless places, seeking rest. Paul teaches us that “to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace” [ROMANS 8:6]. Again, “the Kingdom of God is [a matter] of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit [ROMANS 14:17]. We know that “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness [and] self-control” [GALATIANS 5:22, 23].

Therefore, God calls His people to control their speech, for we Christians have been called to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which [we] have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” [EPHESIANS 4:1-3]. If we will achieve this, we must determine that we put away “anger, wrath, malice, slander and obscene talk from [our] mouth” [COLOSSIANS 3:8]. Note that speech sins all have their origin in the heart, just as the Lord has said. “From within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person” [MARK 7:21-23].

I recall a woman who had a sharp tongue who held membership in a church I served. That razor-sharp tongue was motivated by an explosive temper. “Well,” she excused herself after one explosion, “My temper is like a shotgun; it just blows up and then it is all over.”

At that, I asked, “Have you ever seen the damage a shotgun can do?”

Letting it all hang out is bad policy for building a church. Certainly we need to speak the truth in love, but the guiding principle is love. We do not destroy people through assaulting their character or questioning their motives, for God alone knows the heart and the Spirit of God alone knows the motives. This does not mean that we ignore sinful acts or sinful statements, but it does mean that we do not intentionally seek to injure and hurt others. Above all else, within the assembly of the saints the old nature must be crucified so that the Spirit of God may reign over each life. Surely, this is the meaning of Jesus words to those who were seeking to be disciples. “If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it” [LUKE 9:23, 24].

Paul taught in the Ephesian letter the need for replacement therapy. We are not merely to cease speaking as we once spoke when we were in the world, but we are now to replace what we did previously with that which honours the Master. The Apostle writes, “Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you” [EPHESIANS 4:29-31].

God has commanded, “Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” [COLOSSIANS 3:12-17].

**HYPOCRISY DESTROYS A CHURCH** — “How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing.”

“The tongue,” says James, is “set on fire by hell.” He uses a strong word in this instance. *Gehenna* is the term James used. It speaks of the fire of the pit itself. We are being cautioned that out-of-control speech is capable of unimaginable destruction. Though angry words or malicious speech or slanderous accusations are not necessarily demonically inspired, there can be no question but that the wicked one takes advantage of the opportunities provided through such speech sins committed by the people of God. More saints have been destroyed, more lives ruined, more churches emptied and more devastation in the vineyard of the Lord by angry, malicious and slanderous speech than by all the pogroms mounted against God’s people.

When a people have surrendered to being led by those who are infected with conceit and holding an exaggerated opinion of their own importance, harsh language soon marks the congregation. The people, having surrendered to their own feelings, begin to justify every sort of evil. In the eyes of the world, and in very fact, they become hypocrites “having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power” [see **2 TIMOTHY 3:5a**]. A congregation such as this is able to go through the motion of worship, but it never quite succeeds in realising the presence of the Lord. There is but one thing that must be said when such a condition prevails in a church—“Avoid such people” [**2 TIMOTHY 3:5b**].

The speech of godless people is not the root of the sin in view, but rather the speech of such people reflects the sin that has contaminated the life. This is the reason for James’ sorrowful observation that “no human being can tame the tongue.” As an example of what he means, he cites the condition that we have each observed, and perhaps have even committed. “With [the tongue] we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing.”

It is one thing to confess that we each slip into such foolish actions from time-to-time; it is another to observe people professing to love the Master who yet live contradictory lives such as James describes. When any one of us begins to sin through exalting ourselves, we are dependent upon our fellow members to speak the truth in love to keep us from thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought. Whenever any one of us begins to speak abusively or harshly, we are dependent upon our fellowship members to speak the truth in love, holding us accountable to the Word and to the Body of Christ.

Just as a fig tree cannot bear olives or a grapevine cannot bear figs, so the people of God cannot consistently produce bitterness and desolation. We bear the Spirit of the Lord, and thus it is said that out of the life of those who believe in the Master will “flow rivers of living water” [**JOHN 7:38**]. This fresh water cannot continually be mixed with salt water.

Throughout the years of my service before the Lord, I have observed churches that earned a reputation as killers of preachers. They hire ‘em; they fire ‘em. They use them up, and when they’re used up they get rid of ‘em. Within the communities wherein they are situated, these churches are known and shunned even by the lost. Indeed, “the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their contemporaries than the people of light” [**LUKE 16:8 NET BIBLE**].

I must say that just as I have known churches that are preacher killers, so I have observed preachers that are church killers. These men become so addicted to power that they will do anything to maintain control. Church discipline for such power mongers becomes eclectic, even capricious. One member is groomed and fêted despite grievous sin while another member who seeks to honour God is opposed and put out of the church. As you might imagine, the congregation declines in power and godliness, and regardless of how many people may be present, the church is a hollow shell. Godly leaders produce godly people; godless leaders produce godless people. Everything within a congregation rises and falls on leadership.

It is one thing to point out the pitfalls for a congregation and another to guide the people into avoiding those errors. If we will avoid the errors that destroy a church, we will check our ambitions for power at the door of the church. Among the people of God, we must cultivate an attitude that seeks to serve one another. Jesus said that He “came not to be served but to serve” [MARK 10:45]. He also said, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all” [MARK 9:35]. Do you wish to be great in the Kingdom of God? Jesus said that the greatest among us must become as the youngest. Then, in order to remove any doubt as to His meaning, He said that “The leader [must be] as one who serves” [LUKE 22:26]. To avoid becoming a power broker or allowing power brokers to usurp authority within the church, we must cultivate the servant attitude—individually and congregationally.

Along with the servant attitude, we must overcome the laissez faire attitude that teaches us within modern culture that what we do is nobody’s business and that we are not to be concerned with what others do. In the congregation of the Lord, we are members one of another [see ROMANS 12:5]. We are to “bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the Law of Christ” [GALATIANS 6:2]. Each one must love the other members deeply from the heart, caring enough to hold each other accountable before the Lord. We are not free to pry for purely prurient reasons into the affairs of another, but neither are we free to ignore the obvious sin of others.

Especially, in light of the text, we are responsible to rebuke those who begin to madly pursue power at the expense of congregational health and oppose those who begin to reflect evil through their speech. Our goal must be “to build[] up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love” [EPHESIANS 4:12b-16].

Our goal must be to ensure that the congregation in which the Lord has set us is healthy. This is accomplished as we each seek the welfare of others, as we make ourselves familiar with the will of the Lord, and as we invest our lives in one another for the glory of God. This is an impossibility, however, if we have no living, vital relationship to the Son of God. Christ calls us to life through faith in Him as the Risen, Reigning Lord of God.

The Word of God offers life in the Beloved Son for all who are willing to receive Him as Master of life. The Word of God promises, “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.” That divine Word continues by promising that ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved’ [ROMANS 10:9, 10, 13].



**HOW TO DESTROY YOUR CHURCH**

And that is our invitation to all who share our service. Believe on the Lord, Jesus Christ. Receive the life that He offers freely to all who will receive Him. Then, having been born from above, come, place your life in the fellowship of His church, taking your place as one who shares in building the Kingdom of God and strengthening the people of God. Here, you have a place and a task. May God grant you courage to do what He commands and grace to receive His life. Amen.