



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Allied Forces, Part 2: The Church

Invisible War: Winning Against Evil | Part 6

Tim Badal | August 2, 2015 | Matthew 16:13–19



Turn to the book of Matthew as we continue in our series entitled, "Invisible War." It's a different kind of series than we normally do. However, for the summer we wanted to focus on spiritual warfare and the invisible war in which every Christian is involved. We've learned that we're either winning that battle or we're losing it. There is no middle ground. There's no in between. We need to remember a couple things that we've learned in this series:

1. We need to be alert. We need to be aware of the war and be ready for the battle that is being waged around us.
2. We need to know our adversaries. We spent three weeks looking at this. We talked about the devil and the role that he plays. He is an enemy of all that is good and righteous in this world. He seeks to destroy and disparage the Name of Christ and the ministry of Christ. We talked about the world and its systems. It's a subtle enemy that wreaks havoc in the lives of Christians. Then we looked at the enemy of the flesh. It is the enemy within, the cravings and desires that feed self, instead of the desires and wants of God.
3. We turned from the adversaries to the allies. We talked about the Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit of God Who lives inside of every believer. He gives us the ability to say "No" to sin and worldly lusts and "Yes" to holiness and Christ-like living.

Today, we come to the second ally in the battle we're facing. This ally is the church. Only one of the books that I looked at identified the church as an ally, which is amazing to me. In our passage today, Jesus tells us that He will build His church. He says these words, "...and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it..." (Matthew 16:18). That's an amazing statement. It's a warfare statement that says, "This church—redeemed believers, visible and invisible—when it gathers and does the will and plan of God, will be victorious." It seemed odd to me that the church as a whole neglects this promise given by Christ Himself. Many Christians are reluctant to engage with this ally.

Here's what is said in Matthew 16:13–19:

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

I don't know when YouTube came into existence, but I remember one of the first YouTube videos that I ever saw. It was a video called, "The Battle at Krueger." It was filmed on an African safari and begins by following a herd of water buffalo. As the video progresses, you see water buffalo enjoying themselves at a watering hole when a baby water buffalo begins to wander away from the herd. All the tourists remark with their British and Australian accents about how cute the water buffalo is. They watch

him wander away and suddenly a pride of lions appears and begins to crouch and pursue the water buffalo. They all pounce and the tourists gasp.

The water buffalo is no match for the pride of lions. They knock the baby water buffalo down. On the video you can hear the squeals of the baby enduring the pain of the pride. You think it's over. You think that this little one should never have wandered away from the herd. He made a terrible mistake and now he's going to die.

While the lions are preying on this water buffalo, something amazing takes place. Suddenly, the entire herd of water buffalo comes to the rescue. They know that one of their own is in trouble. You have to remember, water buffalo are no match against lions. Anyone would tell you that water buffalo don't stand a chance. The water buffalo knew that they couldn't rescue the little one from the enemy on their own, but they made a collective decision to go together. Hundreds of water buffalo surround the pride of lions and start knocking the lions off of the baby. They start winning the battle.

It's amazing to watch because the lions are systematically separated. Lions are the superior enemy. Victory should be theirs. However, they did not anticipate the unstoppable force of the multitudes of buffalo. They couldn't be stopped. Within four or five minutes, the baby water buffalo is freed and brought back to the herd. The water buffalo are victorious.

You might ask, "What in the world does this have to do with today's sermon?" It's a great illustration of our spiritual battle. Many of us are like that baby water buffalo. We have wandered away from the fold and the devil has pounced on us. The Bible uses that kind of language: *"Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour"* (1 Peter 5:8). He's prowling around trying to find you. Some of you are in his clutches because of various sins, temptations, trials and tribulations. The devil has got your number.

Our Scripture reminds us of God's understanding. He, as our Creator, knew that we could not win this battle on our own. We need allies. He gives us the Spirit Who resides within us, but He also gives us the church. Though we are a lesser creature than the devil and don't stand a chance on our own, when we band together for a singular purpose, there is nothing that can stand in our way. The problem is that we live in a culture that says, "Christianity is all about living on your own, not with a group of people covenanted together for a singular purpose."

As we look at this text, be reminded of the promise that the gates of hell will not prevail against the church. If you want to win the spiritual war, get involved with the church. Jesus guarantees that the church will be victorious. So why is it that Christians, who have heard their Savior and Lord proclaim there is victory that can be found in the church, don't experience that victory?

1. Many Christians are reluctant to embrace this ally

What would cause people not to embrace this ally? First, let's briefly remember what the church is. When Jesus says, "I'm going to build My church," we can understand it in one of two ways:

1. The invisible church. This is the totality of Christians throughout all time and the entire world who have bowed the knee to Jesus Christ. The invisible church is all the redeemed, from the beginning of time until today.
2. The visible church. The invisible church is made visible through the local church.

I want to talk today about the visible church and your connection to it. Being part of a local church will keep you protected and allow you to have victory in spiritual warfare.

Our doctrinal statement says this about the church:

While all believers are part of the universal church, the New Testament also stresses the importance of all believers being part of a local church. A local church is comprised of a definable group of people.

How do we define this group of people? The Bible makes it clear that this group is brought together on the basis of their commitment to the Lord. It is also those who have identified themselves with and committed themselves to one another. Being part of the church doesn't mean just showing up on Sunday morning. To be part of a church means that you identify with Christ and you also identify with a specific group of people. When you tell someone, "I am a part of Village Bible Church," you are identifying with a group of people, leaders and teachers. You are defining Whom you follow (Jesus Christ) and with whom you are living your Christian life (the saints of Village Bible Church). We see this throughout the New Testament (the saints in Colossae, the saints in Ephesus, the saints who were scattered in Asia Minor). These were definable groups to which individuals had

covenanted themselves. People did not do it to guarantee their salvation. Membership in the local church does not grant you anything; it will not get you into heaven. We say this in our doctrinal statement about membership:

While membership in a church does not guarantee one's salvation, it is imperative that believers be connected to a body of believers for the sake of encouragement, edification and equipping.

Why is being part of a church a protection? You will be encouraged when you're in the church. You will be edified, built up. You will be growing. You will be given tools to say "No" to sin and the things of this world, following Christ with greater maturity as you're connected to this body. The problem is that while we mentally affirm these things, we don't practice them. This is why we have to have this conversation today. While we acknowledge these truths, many Christians have an incomplete understanding of the role of the church. We see the church as something we can take or leave; something optional or disposable.

This attitude couldn't be farther from the truth. Reluctance to join the church may stem from:

Being new to Christianity

Maybe you're new to the faith. Maybe you were told that being a Christian is a personal thing. While this is absolutely true, it's more than that. Being a follower of Christ entails personal actions. This means that you must make the decision to follow Christ for yourself. No one else can do that for you. However, new believers will often take the words "personal relationship with Jesus" and make it a private relationship with Jesus. The Bible makes it abundantly clear that while your relationship with Jesus is personal, it's never private.

Over and over again, the New Testament speaks to the body of believers as a corporate entity. A majority of the New Testament is written to the church corporately. Its imperatives and principles can only be lived out in community. The two sacraments—baptism and communion— must be done corporately. You are not supposed to go home today and baptize yourself in your own swimming pool. Don't do that. That wouldn't be a valid baptism. It must be done with other believers. Communion can't be done alone either. If you do that, you destroy the essence of the word "communion" which comes from common unity. You can't have common unity by yourself. To have common unity, you must be part of a community. We recognize that even the symbols that we are given are for the collective group and not the individual. Your faith is personal, but not private.

A struggle with commitment

The church might not be a big deal for you because you lack commitment. This is a present danger in local churches today. Tom Rainer, a Southern Baptist missiologist, wrote an article this week stating that the number one threat to the American evangelical church is the lack of commitment by its people. This is alive and well here at Village. Not even a generation ago, people assumed that Christians would attend multiple gatherings during the week with other believers. There was a Sunday morning service, Sunday school, Sunday evening service, Wednesday night Bible study and prayer times. There were periodic times of fellowship. Now we try to reduce the level of commitment by saying, "We won't do a morning and an evening service on Sundays. We'll just do one service, if you can do it. Just try going to Sunday School." We continually reduce the opportunities for attendance. Perhaps people were coming once a week, but now they're only coming once a month. Our lack of commitment is growing.

What causes this? We miss church for multitudes of reasons. We live in a post-Christian society. Sunday is no longer sacred. I lived in a time when public school coaches wouldn't schedule practices on Wednesday so that you could go to youth group. That's gone. Now they're scheduling events on Sunday, Wednesday and every other major holiday because those commitments are no longer viewed as important. We fill our lives with other things.

You may say, "Tim, you're being legalistic. You're bringing judgment where there doesn't need to be." Let me assure you of a couple things:

1. I'm not talking about missing church for various valid reasons. Many of you know that I have missed church as your preacher for multiple things. My wife had medical issues. My family went on vacation. And, because I'm a bi-vocational pastor, there are times when I am out of the pulpit and away from you for work. I'm not judging anyone for missing church, because otherwise I'd be a hypocrite.
2. You should view church as a priority. Is it important in your life? As I was growing up, my parents missed church for various reasons, but I always knew that church was a priority. The church body was important to the Badal family. It still is today.

It isn't about missing church. I'm raising the question, "Where are your priorities?"

Cynicism toward the Church

Sadly, throughout history the church has done a terrible job of bearing Christ's image before the world. Because of that, people have been hurt and wronged. Even in our own history, Village Bible Church has hurt a lot of people. Your elders are mere men. We are sinful and have probably hurt people as we have tried to lead the church. It's going to happen. People have real hurts. It's a terrible testimony to a watching world when the church fails, not only its people but also its God, in living out that mission. Augustine once said, "The church is a whore, but she's still my mother." He realized that though the church does deplorable things, he couldn't separate himself from it. He's related and connected to it.

Some of you have incredibly high expectations for the church to be perfect. Do you view your marriage that way? Even in healthy marriages, your spouse is imperfect. Have you stopped being committed to him or her? You have imperfect children. Have you stopped being committed to them? You have an imperfect work environment. Have you quit and given up? Yet, when it comes to the church, one small issue causes you to quit and leave. Your cynicism comes more from cultural reasons than biblical ones. Be careful not to think that the church needs to be perfect. If you find a perfect church, don't go there because you'll mess it up.

Some of you might say, "I love Jesus. I can't get enough of Jesus, but I can take or leave the church." I've heard that from so many people. I have family members who say, "I love Jesus. I do my church on TV and there are great preachers I can listen to; I don't need to involve myself with the church." When you say that, it's like you're saying to me, "I love you, but I can't stand your wife." The church is the bride of Christ. When you badmouth the church, you are badmouthing the bride of Christ, the one whom He went to the cross for, the church He has washed with the renewal of His Word the one He is presenting as blameless and spotless before the Father.

When you gather at a local church and you're frustrated with where the church is and you badmouth the church, you're not badmouthing the pastor or the elders or the person you don't like; you are disparaging the name of the bride of Christ. Be very careful when you speak of the church. That doesn't mean that the church can't do wrong or that we can't address issues. Be very careful not to disparage the bride for whom Jesus laid down His life. Beware that your cynicism of the church is a ploy for the devil to keep you from God's blessing of the church.

This is a problem. How does Jesus address it?

2. Jesus reveals that He gives the Church alone His authority

The word "alone" is an important word. The church alone has been given a level of authority that no one else has. Look at Matthew 16:13–19. Jesus is spending time with the disciples and He asks them, "What are people saying about me?" Jesus knows the answer. He isn't doing a survey trying to understand popular opinion. Jesus wants to get the disciples thinking. Really, Jesus is asking, "Disciples, who do you think that I am? What are you thinking about Me? I want you to verbalize that." Matthew 16:14 says, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." The talk about town was that Jesus was something special. Peter is saying, "You're Someone important. You're a Man given to us by God." Then Jesus stops them and asks Peter, "What do you think?" Peter, who usually puts his foot in his mouth, says, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. You're not a prophet. You're not one of the patriarchs. You are the Son of God. You are the Messiah. You are the one we've been waiting for. You will address our greatest needs." Jesus says to him, "That didn't come from you, Peter. If you start to think much of yourself, remember that God is the One Who revealed this to you. This is how I will build this new entity of the church."

I want you to notice that Jesus hasn't used the word "church" yet. Therefore, when Jesus uses the Greek word *ekklésia*, it is a group of people assembled for a particular reason. If we went to Wrigley field to watch a ball game, this word would describe that type of gathering. It could be a pagan group of people or a Christian group. The word describes a group of people assembled for a particular purpose. This group that is gathered together confessing that Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God is going to do something amazing. Jesus says, "This church that I am going to build will prevail against the gates of hell." That's a pretty powerful statement.

Let's look at what Jesus says about this group of people. The Church has been:

Exalted to a place of authority

How does Jesus exalt this organism called the church? He takes it as His own possession. He says, "I will build My church." Not Jeremiah's church. Not Elijah's church. Not John the Baptist's church. Not Tim Badal's church. Not the elders' church. Not the worship leader's church. Not your church. The church that Jesus is building is His possession. It's His relationship. He says, "This is

Mine.” The church is so special that Jesus Christ died for us. The church is so special that Jesus is now interceding on our behalf to the Father in heaven. The church is so special that when the devil comes and accuses us of sin, Jesus comes to our defense. The church is a special place.

You might think that I’m elevating the church beyond what it deserves. I’m not advocating a papacy or a hierarchy of priests that prevent us from direct access to our One and only Mediator, Jesus Christ. However, as evangelicals, we have swung the pendulum too far the other way. We have made Church into a small “c” instead of the beautiful, powerful thing that Christ made it. Because of that, we lose the battle against sin. We make what should be a big “C” into something very, very small.

Jesus makes the church special because it is the very thing that He is building. *“I will build My church.”* In 1 Peter, Peter tells us that Jesus is the Chief Cornerstone of this church. He’s the Foundation. He is building this structure out of spiritual stones—a spiritual house that will bring glory and honor to Himself.

A few years ago, as a church, we built the Family Life Center. We built about 85% of it ourselves. There’s something awesome about starting a project and seeing it come to fruition step by step. Right now, Jesus is overseeing the greatest building project known to man. It’s called the Church. He’s building it. He’s enjoying the growth that He’s seeing. He’s enjoying seeing each stone placed on top of another. He’s building this beautiful place—this beautiful people—that will bring His Father glory.

He exalts and elevates it, but this is His only building project. Nowhere in Scripture do you see Jesus involved in building community centers. He isn’t involved in building country clubs. He doesn’t build para-church organizations. Those things may have their place, but the one thing Jesus is building is His Church. This raises the question, “If that’s what Jesus is focused on and engaged in, then why aren’t Christians?” Why as a pastor do I hear people say over and over again, when it comes to helping build this local church: “I need to check my calendar; we’re awful busy”? As Christians our focus should be on building up the church. If we’re followers of Christ, wouldn’t we want to follow in His footsteps? Jesus is building this church for His glory.

Equipped to be the authority

In Matthew 16:19 Jesus says that He’s going to give this church the keys of the Kingdom. Whatever we bind on earth will be bound in heaven. Whatever we loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. God says, “I give you My authority on earth. Whenever you say something as a collective body, I’m there with you.” When the church acts as a collective body, it can have confidence that it is acting as the earthly representation of Christ Himself. Where is this most evident? We can see this clearly in the role of church discipline. Whenever a church has a member who is living contrary to his or her own testimony, the church can gather collectively and say, after diligently pursuing repentance in that individual, “A Christian doesn’t act this way. We can hand this individual over to the devil.” That person is then outside the church and not viewed as one of the redeemed. The Bible says that God is behind those decisions when the church is in agreement. We are the middle managers of a collective body which is the church of God. We speak with one voice on behalf of God.

How do we do that? How does a group of people from all tribes, tongues and nations gather together in one place and accomplish that? The Bible says that you need leaders. God calls them elders and pastors. These are men who are called and affirmed by the people to lead them and guide them. In Hebrews 13:17, elders are described as men who keep watch over your souls. The job of an elder is to watch over your souls and help protect you in this spiritual battle. They perform these duties as men who will give an account to God. The role of pastors and elders is to teach and lead those Christians who are in the middle of the fight. They are commanders in the battle who are accountable to the one and only Five-Star General, Jesus Christ. When a church is led well and filled with people who see the role that they play and who place Christ as their Rock and Foundation, that church will change the world. That church will stand strong amidst fiery arrows from hell.

Exhibit this authority

Jesus says the gates of hell will not prevail against the church. This means that the church should be a place filled with believers who have a settled and understood confidence that Jesus Christ has already won the battle. So many of us are walking around with a loser limp. We act like we’ve lost the war. The Bible says that no matter what happens in culture, no matter what happens in our country, our God is on the throne and our church should be on the march. We should be on the frontline, storming the gates of hell. It should give us confidence that when we gather together there is victory. Though the battle has been difficult this week, we gather together and sing our hearts out like battle cries to one another. Jesus is the Victor. Jesus is the King. Jesus is our Lord. We gather together and we are reminded that the battle is His and He has already claimed the victory.

In Ephesians 3:10, Paul says that the church is now the way that God will reveal His manifold wisdom—through the church, through our lives as we're being built up and evangelizing the world. As people drive by the church and see cars in the parking lot, they say, "I wonder what those Christians are doing? Why am I not there?" When your neighbor sees you get up with your family and head to church, they are probably asking, "What are those people doing?" So tell them! This has been one of the greatest forms of outreach to my lost family. They say, "Boy, you sure spend a lot of time at church." We tell them, "We love it. We have the greatest relationships. Where would we have been with Amanda's cancer without our church family around?" Our unsaved family and friends say, "Wow, that's pretty amazing." That doesn't mean that they buy into Christianity, but we evangelize by telling the good things that are going on within our church community. "I don't know where I would be without my small group. I don't know where I would be without my lovely brothers and sisters in Christ." The church is God's marketing plan to save people from their sin. Involve yourself in the church. It is a place that loves people and cares for people, ministers to people and proclaims the gospel to far off lands.

One of my employees at my catering company was blown away by the church's annual report that I had in the van. He said, "I don't like the church. They're all about money. They just fill up on money for their pastors and their church." He was looking at our budget on our annual report and said, "Wait a minute. You have a lot of money going toward missions. What mission organizations do you support?" I showed him on the page all of the missions organizations and he said, "That money doesn't stay with you?" I said, "No. We give that money away." He said, "Who knew? I thought the churches just kept it. I thought the pastors drove nice cars." I said, "Look at me, dude. What are you talking about? I'm driving a catering van." He was blown away that the church would be willing to send thousands of dollars to far off places so that people we've never met can hear the good news of Jesus Christ, have a meal and have clothes on their back. When the church does its job, it is the greatest evangelistic tool that the world will ever see. We need to advertise that. We need to do a good job showing that. The world sees a lot of dirt. There is a lot of garbage that comes when you deal with a church full of sinful people. The news cameras won't talk about the good things that churches do, but they'll talk about sex abuse and they'll talk about pastors who have fallen from grace.

The people of Sugar Grove should be able to say about Village Bible Church, "We are blessed as a community because that church is there. We don't know where we would be without them." If we're not doing that, then we're failing in our ministry. How do we get there? We can view the church in one of two ways:

1. Many of us look at the church like it's a community center filled with opportunities and programs. We see it as something from which we can pick and choose. Every couple of months our local park district sends out a flier. There are Zumba classes and pottery classes. "Join this. Join that." That's how many of us view church. We think it's a community center with an *ala carte* selection of ministries. We say, "What makes me feel good?" This is the American view of church. If you view the church as a program, then when it sounds good you'll be there and if it doesn't, you won't.
2. Or we can view the church as a military base. This is the Biblical view of church. It is a place where there is security and reprieve from the combat. It's a base where soldiers are fed and filled with the rations and ammunition that they need for the battle. The wounded are given medical care. Generals announce the strategy of where the army will go. When we view the church this way, the church will not need to be chastised for not showing up week in and week out.

Brothers and sisters, the Bible tells us that the church is a ministry installation that is called to storm the gates of hell. How do you view the church today?

One writer put it this way: "In American churches today, there are far too many cruise ships and not enough battleships." Think about that this week. Think about that in your approach to ministry. How do we make it a battleship?

3. The Bible reminds us of the Church's activity

Please take time this week to look at Hebrews 10:19–25. Evaluate yourself this week. What should church members commit themselves to? In this passage, I want you to see some of the things that must take place. The church must be willing to:

- **Share our salvation with others.** In Hebrews 10:19, we see that we have been brought into the Holy of Holies through the finished work of Christ on the cross. We should announce this truth both to other Christians and to unbelievers. As Christians, we should remind each other of the grace that God has given each of us.

- **Share openly about our sin.** Hebrews 10:20 tells us to approach the throne with true hearts. The idea here is that we shouldn't have divided loyalties. We need to be honest about where we are. If you're a soldier and you come back to base without water, with bullet wounds and exhausted, you wouldn't respond with "I'm fine" to the question, "How are you doing?" No. You'd say, "I'm shot up. I've got no food. I haven't slept for two days. I'm exhausted." The church doesn't have enough conversations like that. Would you agree? "I'm fine. You're fine. We're all fine." Little do we know that our marriages are falling apart. Our kids are running away from the Lord. We're completely broke. We're falling into sin that we've been struggling against week in and week out. Someone comes up to you and asks, "How are you doing?" and you say, "I'm fine." No, your life is a wreck. As brothers and sisters in Christ, we need to confess our sins one to another (James 5:16). When you come into this place say, "It's been a tough week. I promised myself and I promised God that I wasn't going to fall to that sin and I did every day this week. I said I wasn't going to do this but it happened. The devil is beating me up this week. I don't know how to deal with my wife's medical report. I don't know how to deal with my rebellious child. I don't know what to do. How are you doing?" If we were really honest about it, the devil wouldn't be beating us up as much as he is. However, the devil has us figured out. He says, "If I can get you to think that you're the only one dealing with these issues, you'll keep your mouth shut." You're dying inside and thinking, "I don't get it. I don't know why the church isn't doing anything for me." The reason the church isn't doing anything for you is not because of the church, it's because of you. You're not being honest. You're not utilizing the full measure that God has given.
- **Stand together in the faith.** *"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful"* (Hebrews 10:23). Some of you are walking away from the truth and you don't even know it. You need encouragement. You need people to come along side you and say, "Keep fighting the good fight. Don't give up." You might think that I don't know what it's like to be a Christian in your workplace. Brothers and sisters, the fight has already been won. Fight the good fight. You might think that I don't know what it's like to be in a school that doesn't trust Jesus. I get it. Let's continue to hold fast. Let's see what God will do. While true believers are saved from the beginning to the end, many of us are struggling to persevere. We need God's help. We need His encouragement.
- **Stir up love and good deeds in others.** When you're tempted to give up, and you don't think the gospel is worth it, you need other believers to remind you that we are more than conquerors in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:37). We need one another to stir us up to love and good deeds. Being part of a church means that people will get in your face. People are going to ask, "What are you doing for the Lord? How are you living?" You shouldn't receive that with anger in your heart. You should receive that with joy. I can't tell you how many times people have come to me and said, "Tim, there's an area in your life that you need to fix." I am thankful because I know that my sinful self can make me blind to my sin. I need brothers and sisters to speak the truth to me. I need to have the humility to listen. We need to help one another and do these things in love. Don't cattle prod people, but build them up in love.
- **Show up even when it's hard.** Some people in Hebrews were giving up on going to church. This wasn't because of hobbies or vacations, but because in their world they were being persecuted for going. We don't have that excuse yet. It's coming.

The church reminds me of when my grandparents took me to the circus. I remember being amazed at elephants that were stronger than 100 men combined. I remember asking my grandfather, "Doesn't the elephant know that he's strong?" My grandfather said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "The only thing that's holding that elephant is the rope around its leg. It's tied to that stake which is pretty big, but it's no match for an elephant. Why doesn't anybody tell the elephant that he could be free if he just lifted up his leg and pulled the stake out of the ground?" From a young age the elephant was trained that the stake in the ground was bigger than he was.

The church has fallen for the same lie. The devil has told the church that it can't do anything; it can't change lives; it can't change the community of Sugar Grove; it can't change a workplace; it can't change a community. However, God has built His church and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. Nothing can stand in our way when we stand behind Christ and do what He says.

Let's be the church that God has called us to be. Let's get on the offensive and fight the gates of hell, knowing that in Christ we have the victory.