

To make merchandise is “to make a gain of:” which is, in essence, the appropriating to oneself a dominating power over another, for the purpose of personal advantage or material gain. There is no shortage of individuals who strive to do that very thing.

What motivates an individual to destroy persons in order to advance themselves monetarily? Quick answer: “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vain glory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (1 Jn. 2:16).

The truth of this conclusion is seen in the life of a prophet named Balaam. The children of Israel are on the brink of entering into the land of Canaan: they are residing in the plains of Moab beyond the Jordan at Jericho. Balak, the king of Moab has a problem with that, saying, “Now will this multitude lick up all that is round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field” (Numbers 22:4).

In an effort to defeat and overcome this supposed dilemma, Balak secured the assistance of one Balaam, the son of Beor. Balak secured the services of Balaam with a lure to great riches, saying, “I will promote thee unto very great honor, and whatsoever thou sayest unto me I will do: come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people” (Numb. 22:17). Balak appealed to Balaam’s baser character, and succeeded, because, Balaam “loved the hire of wrong-doing” (2 Peter 2:15).

Yes, there are individuals who for their hire, in imitation of their father the devil (Satan) who “fashioneth himself into an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:15) will “fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness” for the sole purpose of earthly advantage.

“For, uttering great swelling [words] of vanity, they entice in the lusts of the flesh, by lasciviousness, those who are just escaping from them that live in error; promising them liberty, while they themselves are bondservants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he also brought into bondage” (2 Peter 2:18-19).

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The Identity of the Church I

Matthew 16:18

Identity Markers

I. What’s in a name?

- A. 1 Cor. 1:2 – The church of God which is at Corinth
- B. 1 Thess. 2:14 – churches of God which are in Judæa
- C. Rom. 16:16 – churches of Christ

II. Doctrine:

- A. Deut. 32:1-4 – Importance of Doctrine:
- B. Doctrine in the Scriptures:
 - 1. Prov. 4:1-2 – Solomon put it this way, doctrine used in the sense of law.
 - 2. Rom. 16:17 – Warning regarding the preserving of doctrine.
 - 3. Eph. 4:14 – Warning regarding unsettled doctrine.
 - 4. Admonitions to Timothy and Titus:
1 Tim. 1:3, 10; 4:6; 6:1, 3; 2 Tim. 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1, 7, 10
- C. Holding to Sound Doctrine:
 - 1. 2 Jn. 1-9 – walking in truth
 - 2. 2 Jn. 10-11 – Those who do not hold to the teaching (doctrine KJV) of Christ
 - 3. Deut. 13:1-18 – Heeding is a fail-safe.
- D. Determining the Identity of the Church:
 - 1. Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 1:2 - Name – Good place to start
 - 2. Gal. 1:6-10; 3:1; 5:17; 2 Jn. 9; 1 Tim. 4:16 (KJV) - Doctrine – consistent with the doctrine of Christ.
- E. Jude 3 – Would you be able to?

Solomon Said

For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips. All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them. They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.

Proverbs 8:7-9