

Oakville Chinese Hope Church.

It is a real pleasure to be with you today. I am no longer the pastor of Living Hope Church/but I'm still preaching and ministering in various GCC Churches throughout the GTA.

I became an Alliance pastor back in May of 1982. I became the pastor of Georgetown Alliance in 1988/ and served there for 32 years.

When I joined the Alliance it was the fastest growing, evangelical denomination in Canada. Between 1977-1987 it doubled its size. The blessing of God was resting upon the Alliance.

It was theologically conservative. It was clear on the message of the gospel/ the role of women and men in the church/ the reality of hell and eternal punishment for the unrepentant/ the inerrancy and inspiration of the Scriptures/ and the supremacy and independence of the local church. But we know that satan attacks any work of God that is impacting the world. And satan began to attack the Alliance. The first attack came at Assembly 1988/ when the issue of the ordination of women was first introduced.

That was the first shot in a long battle within the denomination. Churches began to wrestle with what the Bible taught/ confusion grew about the roles of men and women in the church and home.

I believed that the Bible was clear. The church for hundreds of years had read the Word and had come to the same conclusion. Men and women are equal/ but are called to different roles in the home and in the church.

For 2000 years Christians had believed that a man is to be the head of his household/ and men should serve as elders and pastors in the church. But starting in 1988 the tide of opinion within the Alliance began to change.

Then in the year 2000/ at the end of his time as President of the Alliance/ Dr. Arnold Cook wrote a book called "Historical Drift, Must My Church Die?" Dr. Cook saw what was happening.

In his book Dr. Cook warned about the threats to orthodoxy he saw beginning to appear. He saw the trajectory of the movement/ and warned us about the dangers of the path we were on.

The Alliance ignored the warnings of Dr. Cook/ and in the next 20 years the Alliance left it's conservative evangelical roots/ and has been taken over by a liberal majority.

There are still faithful people in the Alliance. There are still faithful churches. I have many friend within the Movement. But today it is becoming a liberal denomination. It's not like the United or Anglican Church yet. But it has chosen the path of liberalism/ and will ultimately like the Anglican and United churches become irrelevant.

As the blessing of God has been removed from these old main line denominations so too is the blessing of God being taken from the Alliance.

The Alliance is shrinking and is in turmoil and upheaval. Other churches like Living Hope and Oakville Chinese Hope church are also leaving. The conservative evangelical influence on the Alliance is evaporating.

History has shown us time and time again/ that when a denomination abandons orthodox truth the Spirit of God abandons that denomination.

I would like to take a few moments to explain why Living Hope Alliance left the Alliance. The short answer is hermeneutics.

Hermeneutics is the science of how one studies and interprets the Bible. The rules of hermeneutics govern how we read and interpret the Word of God.

For hundreds of years Evangelicals have used a very specific hermeneutic. This is called the historical, grammatical method. And as a result, for hundreds of years these Conservative Christians have come to similar conclusions.

But in the 90's many within the Alliance began to question this method of interpreting the Bible. ***The liberals within the denomination began to apply a defective hermeneutic/ and as a result they began to come to defective conclusions.***

Illustration. The word head or kephale in Eph 5/ is used to describe both Jesus the head of the church/ and the husband, the head of his wife.

The word means leader, one in authority, or one in charge. And we can know that by using a conservative hermeneutic. The rules say we must compare Scripture with Scripture. So we examine how Paul uses the word in the immediate context. Then in the book as a whole. Then how other New Testament writers use the word/ then how it was used in 1st century Greek.

So kephale is used in Paul's writings and throughout Scripture to communicate this idea of leader and authority.

But in time, in the 2nd and 3rd century/ the word kephale began to take on the idea of source or fountain head. But that didn't happen till well after the New Testament was written.

But what modern interpreters have done is to transport that meaning of kephale back in time/ and imposed it on the writings of Paul in Eph 5.

So many Alliance pastors today teach that Paul was using the word kephale to communicate not the idea that Jesus is the source or enabler. And so they give the verse a meaning that the Apostle Paul never intended. They abuse and misuse the Word of God. And this is very, very serious. And since this meaning of the word was not offensive/ and was more palatable to our feminist society/ it was accepted within the Alliance. This new hermeneutic was being taught at Ambrose and other liberal seminaries/ and as older pastors retired and were replaced by younger more liberal pastors/ the denomination changed.

So that in 2012 the denomination voted to disregard what the Bible says/ and chose to have women serve as elders. Then in 2016 they voted to allow women to be Sr. Pastors.

You see the issue has never been about women, it was never about fairness or justice! It was always about how we read and interpret the Word of God.

The problem is that the Alliance no longer trembles before the Word. Listen to the words of Isaiah 66:2b But this is the one to whom I will look, he who is humble and contrite in spirit and who trembles at my word.

But gender roles was not the only place this process was happening. This new hermeneutic was allowing for all kinds of theological error and unbiblical practice.

For years *Penal Substitutionary Atonement* was the foundation of how we understood the gospel. Now it has come under attack. The idea of an angry God punishing his Son is dismissed as cosmic child abuse/ and replaced with a less offensive understandings of the Atonement.

Today the *doctrine of hell* and eternal punishment are rejected by some within the Alliance. *Inspiration and the inerrancy* of Scripture are denied by others.

Some deny the *historical reality of Adam and Eve*/ and believe that the first 11 chapters of Genesis are a myth. And some believe that we should accept and bless monogamous *homosexual relationships*.

Then other issues began to emerge. There was the *Charismatic issue*/ prophecy and extra biblical revelations/ all of which undermine the foundation of trust in the Word of God. And then there was *confusion about the nature of the church*. I will speak about this later.

Hermeneutical confusion always leads to doctrinal confusion. And this is why Georgetown Alliance was forced to leave the CAMA.

Tell our story.

As all this was happening within the CAMA/ we at Georgetown Alliance were becoming increasingly concerned. So we tried to make a difference. We began the ARF, the Alliance Renewal Fellowship.

After a while we were threatened by the leadership of the denomination/ and told that our credentials would be taken if we persisted. We established theological anchors for our church. Then after the vote in 2016 we decided to pull back from CAMA. We stopped giving/ because we could not support planting churches that had women elders and pastors. We did not want to support Ambrose University/ where much of this bad doctrine was coming from. And we stopped attending denominational events.

What were for us issues of faith, truth and obedience/ were for the denomination just issues of opinion or preference. And so eventually on June 27 2019/ we were challenged by our DS to fully support the CAMA or get out.

We took the summer to pray and seek God and in September of 2019 we decided to gauge the pulse of our congregation. We took a poll. A large majority decided that it was time to go.

We had been told by the President and the DS that the amount we would have to pay for our building would reflect the % of the vote.

We took a vote in the fall of 2019. When the votes were tallied 90% of our church family voted to leave the Alliance. There were some on our membership who didn't vote/ and they were counted as no votes. Of those who voted 93% voted to leave the CAMA in Canada.

Our property was valued at \$7,000,000 Instead of paying 7% of 7 million/ we were told we had to pay 30%. We negotiated that number down to \$1,750,000. So we are now in the process of buying our building back from the District/ even though they didn't contribute.

But God has blessed us and we are moving forward. We have a new pastor and a number of new staff. The church is growing and the gospel is being preached.

Now for the last part of my time I would like to speak about the spiritual benefits that our church family has enjoyed since leaving the Alliance.

I would like you to turn to 1 Tim 3:14-15.

Paul has been teaching the church in Ephesus about the qualifications of elders and deacons. He tells them that he hopes to come and visit Ephesus soon.

But he says that "if I am delayed in coming/ this letter will help you know how you ought to behave in the Household of God."

In this passage Paul is giving the Ephesian Christians clear instruction about the church/ and about how one ought to behave in the church. He first describes the church as a household.

1. The church... a household of faith

The first thing Paul says is that the church is a family of faith. A household, or a clan/ that share the same faith and practice, vision and goals. We share a set of beliefs and certain doctrines/ and we have a shared commitment to certain truths.

We left the Alliance because the majority of churches did not share our fundamental beliefs. They were becoming different households.

40 years all the households that were Alliance across Canada/ all agreed on what the Bible said/ But today we are a divided and deeply fragmented group.

And so we had a choice. We could spend our time and energy fighting the denomination/ trying to stem the tide of liberalism and apostasy. Or we could spend our time fighting for souls.

I knew that the fight was lost/ when the issue of affirming homosexual relationships/ was brought forward at General Assembly 2019.

That brought me back to 1988/ when the last issue to come to the floor was the ordination of women. That issue took 26 years to pass. This issue won't take that long to be embraced. We are now one of 23 households across Canada. We have shared theology, doctrine and practice. And we are growing rapidly.

We can now contribute to the GCC with a clear conscience. We can fight for souls rather than fight a denomination. Living Hope Georgetown, Hope Oakville, Oakville Chinese Hope Church are households/ in a unified village that share a theology purpose and vision!

After we left the Alliance and the agreement was completed/ I was asked to speak at Harvest Niagara. A GCC church. It was Dec 6 2020. During the worship I broke down in tears and wept/ as I realized I was home. I was with my tribe, my family, my household.

That day I experienced a sense of joy and belonging and fellowship/ that I had not experienced in an Alliance event for over 20 years. I knew I was home Dec 6 2020. It's critical that this household is connected with other households/ that share your heart, theology, vision and doctrine. Denominations or church associations are important.

It allows us to do things together that we could not do alone. But we must do those things with people we trust/ and with whom we share fundamental beliefs and doctrines.

2. The church... the church of the Living God

The second thing Paul says about the church/ is that we are the church of the Living God. One of the great spiritual blessings of leaving the Alliance is/ that we are now an independent Church. We are not an Alliance Church/ or a GCC Church. We are God's church.

We are no longer under the authority of the General Assembly of the Alliance. We are under the authority of Christ and His Word/ and the authority of the pastor and elders of our church. While we were part of the Alliance we were obligated to embrace the theology/ and follow the practice that the General Assembly passed. It was imposed upon us.

While we were part of the Alliance I wrote many letters/ asking the District for assurances that they would not require our elders to do anything or preach anything/ that would go against our understanding of the Word of God.

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n the end they refused to give us this assurance. They would not promise to allow us to follow our conscience and our understanding of the Word of God. They said we were all under the authority of the General Assembly.

The leadership of the Alliance believed that they had spiritual authority over our elders/ and over me as the pastor of our church. The president of the denomination said that to our elders during one of our meetings.

We were under the authority of a spiritual leadership that I believed was no longer orthodox/ or faithful to the clear literal teaching of the Word of God.

Somehow over the years the Alliance had evolved. They once believed that the churches were independent/ and could join or leave the Alliance as they saw fit. They saw the ultimate authority in the church as being the elders board. But that slowly changed.

The leadership began to see themselves as the church/ and the local church as just branches of the mother church. They saw the General Assembly and not the Bible as supreme.

This was made obvious at a denominational meeting in 2015/ when the DS explained that the District was the church/ the DS was the pastor/ the Dexcom were the elders/ and that we must tithe to the District. I was shocked.

What the Bible teaches is that the local church is independent/ and that the highest authority in the church are the elders/ under the leadership of Jesus and His Word.

This is what Paul teaches here. The New Testament does not speak about denominations, District Superintendents, Bishops or General Assemblies. The church is independent.

I think the big change came in the Alliance/ when the denomination gained legal ownership of our buildings. It has become a huge point of leverage. It cost us over 1.5 million dollars to leave. It was a heavy price to pay...but worth it.

I'm so blessed to be part of the GCC. We are now an independent church that is part of a network of churches/ that is very much like what the Alliance was 100 years ago. The GCC is an orthodox fellowship of churches that together will do great things for God in the years to come.

If we do not hold to our doctrinal commitments the GCC will confront and challenge us. If we persist in our bad theology or practice they will kick us out of the fellowship.

We are not under the authority of the General Assembly. The GCC can never tell us to deny the gospel or practice unbiblical behavior. If they do we simply write a letter and leave. We will never be under any authority other than that of Jesus. We are a church of the Living God.

3. The church...a pillar and buttress of the truth

Lastly Paul describes the church as a pillar and buttress of truth. These words pillar and buttress are terms used to describe building techniques/ that keep a structure secure and unmovable.

In areas of the world prone to earthquakes they sink pillars deep into the ground/ and buttress the building with thick walls/ to ensure it will stand strong no matter how the ground shakes.

The church is not the only pillar and buttress of the truth. There are others like the Word of God which we hold in our hands/ the preaching of the gospel and godly elders etc. But the church exists to defend, support and preach the truth of God.

The Alliance in my opinion was doing the opposite. It was calling into question the truth of the Word of God.

In my last 20 years in the Alliance/ I was hearing people ask the question that satan asked Eve/...has God really said? This question which undermines our trust in the Word of God/ is being whispered all over the Alliance today. Does the Bible really mean what it seems to be saying?

And it is being asked by well-meaning people. It's being asked by people who really want to see the church grow. I discovered this one day when I was confronted by one of these people. I was asked "Paul why are you such a misogynist? Why do you want people to think that God is against women? Why don't you want to remove barriers/ barriers that keep people coming to Jesus?" They saw my commitment to the Word as an obstacle to church growth.

And I realized then/ that these brothers would rather conform the church to the world/ in order to attract the world/ rather than be a biblically distinct shining light in the world.

They were willing to alter the teaching of the Word in order to please the world. Rather than be faithful to the Word in order to please God.

And the casualty in this well-meaning appeal to the world is always truth. It is the truth that makes the church unique and distinct/ and it's the truth lived and preached that is ultimately so appealing/ in a sin-sick, broken, dark world. We don't win the world by being like it. The only way we can win the world is to be a living alternative to it. We can never win the culture to Christ by being like the culture.

Truth must be the foundation of the church. And the only truth we have is found in the living, inspired and inerrant Word of God.

As I have said since the early 90's truth has been increasingly dismissed within the Alliance. It began innocently enough with gender roles.

But today the literal reading of Scripture is laughed at by some/ homosexuality is affirmed by a few/ hell is denied by many/ and the message of the gospel is being compromised.

The great blessing of being in the GCC is that the Word of God is not undermined. One of our six core values within the GCC is Bold Preaching/ Which is the faithful expositional preaching of the Living Word of God.

So Oakville Chinese Hope Church you are part of a new family. Your household is part of a group of 23 households/ that are committed to orthodox evangelical theology.

We are a small but a growing network of churches that will do great things for God in the years to come if we stay faithful to His Word.

But you are also free. You are not an Alliance church or a GCC church/ you are the Church of the Living God. You are not constrained by a denomination. You can't be told what to preach, what to believe, what sin to accept. We are free.

And you can proclaim and defend the truth. Truth will never be confused, covered or compromised. This congregation will always be a city set on a hill. A beacon of light in Oakville.

May the Lord bless you as you continue to serve Him as part of the GCC. Amen.