

The Devil in Church

January 7, 2018

Ephesians 6:11-12 ESV

11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes (*methodeia* - cunning arts, strategy, method, plan, craft, trickery) **of the devil.**

12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

wrestle (*palē* - a contest between two in which each endeavours to throw the other, and which is decided when the victor is able to hold his opponent down with his hand upon his neck)

There is a reason why Paul describes the Christian's spiritual warfare as wrestling. To walk through this earth-life as a Christian is like trying to walk through quicksand up to your neck.

1 Peter 5:8 ESV

8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Job 1:7-9 ESV

7 The LORD said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it."

8 And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?"

9 Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason?"

Genesis 4:7 ESV

7 If you [Cain] do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it."

Judges 16:15 ESV

15 And she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and you have not told me where your great strength lies."

Samson did not "win" and Satan "lose" those first three times. Satan won all four times, because without the three times there wouldn't have been the fourth.

2 Corinthians 2:11 ESV

11 so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs (*noēma* - evil purpose, mind, thought).

If we are not careful, we can be "outwitted" by Satan - he is smarter and far more clever than we are.

Where Ephesians 6 addresses the forcefulness and strength of Satan's warfare, 2 Corinthians 2:11 addresses the evil motive and intent behind Satan's warfare.

2 Corinthians 11:3 ESV

3 But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning (*panourgia* - *trickery, sophistry, cleverness, ingenuity of deception*), your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

There is a genius behind Satan’s method which is impossible to oppose or defeat without the genius and power of the Holy Spirit.

Whatever in your life does not lead you to sincere and pure devotion to Christ is part of Satan’s schemes and methodology to wear you down with temptation until you finally cave in. Whatever is not taking you to Christ is taking you away from Christ.

- 1. **Deception and error in the pulpits and the congregation** (*and how the pulpits and congregation can play off of one another in a vicious cycle*).

1 Timothy 4:1 ESV

1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons.

Matthew 16:23 ESV "But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan!"

2 Timothy 4:1-4 CSB

1 I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus, who is going to judge the living and the dead, and because of his appearing and his kingdom:

2 Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; rebuke, correct, and encourage with great patience and teaching.

3 For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, will multiply teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear what they want to hear.

4 They will turn away from hearing the truth and will turn aside to myths.

Teaching God’s Word is not merely helpful instruction; the teaching of God’s Word is spiritual warfare.

Paul addresses two key elements in Satan’s strategy:

- 1. *The heart of people turning from Truth.*
- 2. *The response of the Church when people leave.*

<p>SABBATICAL SUMMARY REPORT Dr. Greg Ammons, Senior Pastor First Baptist Church Garland, Texas</p> <p>Dates: May 14 – June 4, 2017 Project: Declining Churches Purpose: To determine the factors which contribute to the decline of churches in contemporary America in order to address these issues at our church.</p>

“During this respite, I spent time studying the decline of churches in America. The numbers reflecting the state of the church in America are disturbing. According to the Hartford Institute for Religious Research, there are 350,000 congregations in America. Of these churches, 314,000 of them are Protestant. The median church size in the United States is 75 members. Approximately 11% of church-goers attend smaller churches, while 50% of church-goers attend one of the top 10% of the largest congregations. Therefore, most church-attenders prefer a larger church. Also, only 20.4% of Americans attend church on any given Sunday.”

“According to churchleadership.org, and other sources, 4,000 churches a year cease to exist as a congregation. One-half of all congregations do not have one person join the church during the entire year.”

“According to SBC Life, 8,000 Southern Baptist churches (SBC) a year will not baptize one person. From the same research, 80% of SBC churches are either stagnant or declining.”

Is this a cultural shift in our society, or is this spiritual warfare?

To prevent people (and money) from leaving, a ministry must either:

1. *become domineering, authoritative, controlling, intimidating*
2. *resort to people-pleasing through doctrinal compromise, marketing strategies, sales gimmicks, celebrity leaders, psychological self-help and self-improvement*

“Small churches: don’t grieve God. He gives growth when it’s time. Just stay faithful.”

—Chuck Swindoll

2 Timothy 2:24-26 ESV

24 And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil,

25 correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth,

26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

Reasons why we strive or quarrel:

- *To win the debate (a competitive ego).*
- *To prove that I’m right (to protect my reputation and status).*
- *To convince the other person (usurp the Holy Spirit).*
- *To exert control (over the other person).*

“To be effective the preacher's message must be alive; it must alarm, arouse, challenge; it must be God's present voice to a particular people.”

— A.W. Tozer

“Sound Bible exposition is an imperative must in the Church of the Living God.” — A.W. Tozer

“All the cunning of the devil is exercised in trying to tear us away from the Word.” — Martin Luther

“Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, there a church of God exists, even if it swarms with many faults.”
—John Calvin

How Deception and Error Enter the Church

a. Absence of sound Biblical exposition.

1 Timothy 3:15 ESV

15 if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.

Amos 8:11-12 ESV

11 "Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord GOD, "when I will send a famine on the land-- not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD.

12 They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the LORD, but they shall not find it.

Chuck Swindoll, Daily Devotional, Breaking the Famine Pt. 1, 12/14/2015)

“Without meaning to be overdramatic, that prediction has now come to pass. We currently live in the midst of such a famine. The sound, faithful, balanced, consistent, and healthy teaching and preaching of the Word of God is seldom heard here in these United States or, for that matter, around the world.

Don't misunderstand. There are churches and chapels, temples and tabernacles where religious activities abound. And there are people of every persuasion who speak and teach, who appear in the media, who write books, who talk about God and discuss subjects the Bible addresses related to our times. But the lack of solid biblical food based on sound doctrine, served regularly and in healthy portions, is conspicuous by its absence.”

2 Timothy 2:15 ESV

15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved (*dokimos* - pleasing, acceptable, proven, tried), a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling (*orthotomeō* - to make a straight cut, dissect correctly, to teach directly and correctly) the word of truth.

1 Timothy 4:13-16 ESV

13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.

14 Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.

15 Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.

16 Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

The pastor is not the church's office manager, HR department, growth strategist, events coordinator, finance comptroller, etc. Assuming any of those roles is to neglect the gift by not being entirely immersed in reading of Scripture, exhortation and teaching.

"Save me from the curse that lies dark across the modern clergy: the curse of compromise, of imitation, of professionalism. Save me from the error of judging a church by its size, its popularity or the amount of its yearly offering. Help me to remember that I am a prophet—not a promoter, not a religious manager, but a prophet. Let me never become a slave to crowds. Heal my soul of carnal ambitions and deliver me from the itch for publicity."
— A.W. Tozer, *Voice of a Prophet: Who Speaks for God?*

b. Defiant and open rebellion to the Word of God.

"We're living in a culture that is politically correct but is theologically, ethically, and morally corrupt. To the very center of its being, today's culture is corrupt. Humanity without Christ is totally depraved. The world will lead you directly away from the things of God, rather than toward them."

—Chuck Swindoll, *Insight for Living*, "Identify the Enemy" Pt.1

"A lot of people come up here and thank Jesus for this award. I want you to know that no one had less to do with this [Emmy] award than Jesus," an exultant Griffin said, holding up her statuette. 'Suck it, Jesus. This award is my god now.'" —Kathy Griffin, Reuters, September 11, 2007

Romans 3:10-12 ESV

10 as it is written: "**None is righteous, no, not one;**

11 **no one understands; no one seeks for God.**

12 **All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."**

Zechariah 7:11-12 ESV

11 **But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears that they might not hear.**

12 **They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from the LORD of hosts.**

"Their denial of any objective moral standards, or even their basing of morality upon society's consensus instead of God's Word, is tantamount to saying, 'Who is God that we should obey Him?' Like Pharaoh of old, much of society today is neither in awe of God nor afraid of His righteous judgments."

—Jerry Bridges, "I Give You Glory, O God," Day 12

c. Mingling of the holy and the profane.

"Finding himself unable to prevent the Fountain of Life being opened, he [Satan] has labored incessantly to poison the streams which flow from it. If he could not destroy it, he has too often neutralized its usefulness by addition, subtraction, or substitution. In a word he has 'corrupted men's minds.'" —J.C. Ryle

Psychology, Self-Help or Self-Improvement Promotion (*exalting self instead of self being crucified in Christ - any doctrine where the self-life is allowed to live is not from God*)

"As a culture, present-day Christianity has redefined spiritual maturity. The reformers knew we were saved to glorify God. We moderns live to be blessed. The mature among us are now thought to be the successful, the happy, the effective people on top of things and doing well . . . We're more attracted to sermons, books, and conferences that reveal the secrets to fulfillment . . . than to spiritual direction that leads us through affliction into the presence of the Father."

--Lawrence J. Crabb, Jr., *The Pressure's Off*, p.183.

d. **Imbalance of Biblical Truth** - *error is just as much what is left out as it is what's added in.*

"Human nature is like a drunk peasant. Lift him into the saddle on one side, over he topples on the other side." --Martin Luther

Acts 20:26-27 ESV

26 **Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all,**

27 **for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.**

1 Corinthians 2:13 YLT

13 **which things also we speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Holy Spirit, with spiritual things spiritual things comparing.**

1 Corinthians 2:13 KJV "...comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

1 Corinthians 2:13 AMP

13 **And we are setting these truths forth in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the [Holy] Spirit, combining and interpreting spiritual truths with spiritual language [to those who possess the Holy Spirit].**

Examples of balanced, yet apparent contradictory Truth.

- *We are not saved by works, but we cannot be saved without works.*
- *Grace is free and unconditional, yet grace requires holiness of heart and lives.*
- *We are to work out our own salvation, striving to enter into the Kingdom, yet we must rest and cease from our own works.*

"How little of Scripture there is in modern sermons compared with the sermons of those masters of theology, the Puritanic divines! Almost every sentence of theirs seems to cast sidelights upon a text of Scripture; not only the one they are preaching about, but many others as well are set in a new light as the discourse proceeds. They introduce blended lights from other passages which are parallel or semi-parallel thereunto, and thus they educate their readers to compare spiritual things with spiritual. I would to God that we ministers kept more closely to the grand old Book. We should be instructive preachers if we did so, even if we were ignorant of "modern thought," and were not "abreast of the times." I warrant you we should be leagues ahead of our times if we kept closely to the Word of God."

—Charles Spurgeon, "How to Read the Bible"