

## A DEADLY ENEMY WITHIN THE CHURCH

### Deuteronomy 1:5-8

**Introduction:** Israel had become accustomed to walking around in circles for years God had led them around the wilderness and so that was all they knew and had become content to stay within the safety of the mountains. When it was time, God broke into their routine way of life and told them, "*...you have been here long enough, it's time for you to move on...*"

- Israel had become content with going in circles and camping in nice, comfortable places and had even forgotten why they were out there in the wilderness in the first place.
- When an enemy would come, they would fight, but seldom did they encounter any enemies, so they just camped here then there, doing nothing more, for years.
- So, what is the deadly enemy within our church?
  - Nobody in the church claims that the first five books of the Bible are just stories.
  - Nobody in the church says that the creation account is fiction.
  - Nobody in the church denies that Jesus walked on water and did the things He did.
  - Nobody in the church denies that one day Jesus is coming back.
  - We, in the church, do as we please without interference from the government.
  - So, what is the deadly enemy?

### I. A DEADLY ENEMY IN THE CHURCH TODAY IS THE ROUTINE

1. Routine is the way of life in the church. What will happen next Sunday can be easily predicted.
  - Nothing unusual is expected from God and things will be pretty much as they were last Sunday and the Sunday before that one and so on. The only thing that really changes in the Sunday bulletin is the hymn numbers.
2. Nobody expects anything to change at the cemetery.
  - However the church is not the cemetery and what has been should not dictate what will be for next Sunday.
  - God's people are supposed to grow and their needs change from Sunday to Sunday.
3. Everybody knows just what will happen and that is a deadly enemy in the church.
  - Everything we can think of gets the blame for nothing happening in the churches, from the devil to whatever.
  - The greatest enemy of the church is not from the outside, but from within - an attitude of accepting things as they are and always have been. What WAS determines what WILL be.
  - With this attitude, a church will not and cannot be doing God's will and will not grow.

### II. HOW A CHURCH GETS INTO A ROUTINE

1. The major process of learning is by doing it over and over again and again until it can be done without even thinking, a type of memorization.
  - Schools teach children to do/say things over and over until they "learn" them.

- Our militaries do the same thing in basic training, our troops do something over and over again and again until they can do it blindfolded.
  - Our worship services do the same thing. How much thought is given to the words that are being sung of a familiar hymn? What about familiar scripture being read? How much attention is paid to the sermon being preached?
  - We are caught up in singing, praying, reading, participating in worship services without any feelings, any awe, any wonder, or any expectations.
  - God cannot get into our services because we have it all fixed up for Him and all He need do is to just bless what we do.
2. The next step for the enemy within the church is for everyone to get into a "rut."
    - During winter and rainy seasons country roads become impassable except for ruts that have been formed in the road by some vehicle that went that way first, making deep impressions in the muddy road. Everybody then followed in those deep ruts so they could move on down the road. Everybody who went down that road had to go the same way for the ruts were the way to go.
    - Churches also get into a "rut" because somewhere way back something was done for the first time and ever since that first time, it has always been done exactly the same way. Nobody ever asks why, how, where, when, but just blindly does it the same way.
  3. The result of a church being in a "rut" is that it is controlled by what was done long before and nobody ever thought of changing the way things have been done.
    - Expecting nothing new runs the church and spiritual inactivity is dominant, causing the church to visualize nothing and to not have a desire for any change or improvement.
  4. Some churches try to get out of it's "rut" by having contests, programs, gimmicks and worldly tricks to bring itself out of enslavement to the routine. However, all that is really done when this is tried is to bring some people in to join in the repeating of the dead services without feeling, without meaning, without awe, without spiritual happenings.

### III. PEOPLE FORGET WHAT THE CHURCH IS MADE UP OF

1. The church is not the building, sorry. It is an assembly of people
  - America is made up of people.
  - Society is made up of people.
  - Thus the church is made up of real people and they make up what kind of church it is - no worse, no better, no wiser, no holier, no more alert, and no more worshipful.
  - For the church to change, it's people must change.
2. Three sins are usually found in churches that are not growing for the Lord:
  - The sin of self-righteousness, the sin of judgment, and the sin of complacency.
3. When Jesus said, "*...One of you will betray me...*" What did His disciples say? Did they all to Judas? No, each one asked "is it I?"

4. Most church members feel that they are what/where they ought to be in the Lord and therefore see no need for any change or improvement, therefore causing them to judge everyone else by what they think they are.
5. Feeling no need to change spiritually, leads to complacency.
  - "Lord, I'm satisfied with my spiritual condition. I hope one of these days You will come and I will be taken up to meet You in the air and I will get to rule over five cities."
  - These are the ones who pray little, are irregular in attendance, but expect to go zooming off into the heavens and join the Lord in triumph with the victorious saints.

## CONCLUSION:

1. Many are fooling themselves. Jesus says what God said to Israel in the wilderness, "***You have stayed long enough where you are, break camp and move on into the hill country.***"
  - God has wonderful new spiritual things for His Church. Everything He has promised can be had right now.
2. If a Christian call Jesus "***Lord***" then how dare him/her stay any longer in his/her rut. Get up and move on. However if a Christian refuses to get up and move on for the Lord, even the Angels can't help.
3. Begin to pay attention to what you are saying when you are singing, look closely at the scripture you are reading, listen closely to the message and apply it to yourself, not those across the sanctuary. Prepare yourself to worship before you ever enter the sanctuary.
  - Worship leaders should spend time with the Lord to see WHAT HE WANTS in the worship service.
  - Everyone get out of that routine, that rut and let God be in charge and bring some needed changes.