

# The Devil wants to Destroy this Church

By Al Felder

*“I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. <sup>10</sup>Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” (Revelation 2:9, 10)*

*“I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.” (Revelation 2:13)*

*“But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.” (Revelation 2:24)*

*“Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.” (Revelation 3:9)*

These verses are excerpts from the letters that Jesus wrote to the seven churches. Many of them were in danger of falling away. There were a variety of problems that existed in these churches, but there was one enemy seeking their destruction – the Devil. The Devil sought to destroy these churches by any means necessary, and we need to understand that the Devil wants to destroy this church.

It is a sad reality that churches can and do die. As you read through the letters to the seven churches you discover many things. A church may appear to be alive, but really be dead. A dead church can be resurrected, or come back to life. A dead church can have spiritually alive individuals. Finally, all will be judged.

The Devil is our great adversary. He has one goal. Now think about that for a moment. The average person may have many goals. There may be many things that they want to accomplish, but the Devil just has one. His one goal is to destroy this church. There are many tactics he uses in order to accomplish this task.

We have already read one of them in the letter to the church at Smyrna. The tactic that the Devil used against the church there was persecution. Jesus told them that the Devil was going to cast some of them into prison. He said that they would be tried, have tribulation, and He encouraged them to be faithful unto death.

During this time period the church underwent a persecution the likes of which has not been seen since that time. Now, I know that there are places where Christians are persecuted

and sometimes killed today. During this time, however, the largest and most powerful empire the world has ever known was used by the Devil to seek to completely annihilate the church. Christians were imprisoned, beat, sold as slaves, and killed in a variety of ways. They were crucified, burned to death, slain with the sword, and killed in the arenas by wild animals.

I'm thankful to God that we do not have such persecutions where we live today, but what if we did? What if every time you assembled for worship you put your life and the lives of your family members in danger? That's the way it was for our brothers and sisters under Roman rule. When the Roman soldiers discovered where they were meeting, they would capture them and eventually kill them.

Could you imagine that being the case today? How many of us would be here? The sad reality is that we have it easier than God's people have ever had it. We are blessed beyond measure in this country, and we waste it. We often allow the smallest things to keep us from serving God the way that we should. If a minor inconvenience can keep you away from the Lord's church, then you would not remain faithful in the face of persecution.

The Devil wants to destroy this church with immorality. *"<sup>20</sup>Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols."* (Revelation 2:20) This was written to the church at Thyatira. In this city a man had to be a part of a labor guild if he wanted to be successful in business. These labor guilds had their own idols. Worship unto these idols often involved fornication with the temple prostitutes.

Considering the history of the area and the words of the text, it would stand to reason that this woman convinced the men that it was alright to participate in these things for the sake of their jobs. Have you ever heard someone say, "It's just business?" I have. I wonder if that's what this woman used to convince these men. "It's just business. It doesn't matter what you do." Friends, that's a lie from the Devil. God expects you to represent Him no matter where you go or what you do. God expects you to glorify Him in the way you conduct business.

Young people, society will try to convince you to do many immoral things. Some of the greatest things you will have to face will be pornography, premarital sex, alcohol, and drugs. The world will try to convince you that these things are alright. After all, everybody is doing these things. Peer pressure will lead you down a path of sin if you give into it.

If the Devil can get our young people to live a life of immorality, he will destroy this church. Young people, you can't live a life where you engage in pornography, premarital sex, alcohol, and drugs; and expect things to be alright between you and the Lord. Listen to what Jesus said to this woman and those who followed her.

*"<sup>22</sup>Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. <sup>23</sup>And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches*

*shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.” (Revelation 2:22, 23)*

Young people, if you engage in immorality you will receive the wages of immorality. Do you know what the wages of immorality are? Death! A spiritual death that separates you from God. It is a condition that will last for all eternity in hell.

Have you ever felt alone? Have you ever felt depressed? Have you ever felt afraid? Have you ever felt excruciating physical pain? How would you like to feel all those things at once multiplied by one thousand? Hell is worse than that. Don't spend an eternity wishing that you didn't waste your life trying to be like the world. God will judge you according to your works, and He will reward you accordingly.

The Devil wants to destroy this church with division. *“From whence come wars and fighting's among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?”* (James 4:1) False doctrine is not the main cause for problems in the church. The main cause for problems in the church are members who cannot or will not get along with each other. Division has been one of the Devil's most successful tactics to use against the church.

When you read the New Testament you find division between members of the body of Christ discussed over and over again. *“For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.”* (1 Corinthians 1:11) The church at Corinth had numerous problems with squabbles between members of the church. They fought over their favorite preacher, personal matters, liberties, social status, and spiritual gifts. They basically fought for any reason they could find.

The passage in James lets us know the real reason for this division. They lost the battle within. They allowed the flesh to take control instead of the Spirit. *“For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?”* (1 Corinthians 3:3) When we act like the world, there is strife. Division within the body of Christ occurs when one or two people do not follow the Bible.

There is very little self-control today. No matter where you go, people act out when they don't get their way or are unhappy about something. Some people have lost the ability to have rational discussions about situations. Instead, they want to yell, scream, and make threats. No problems are solved this way, they are only made worse. This is not God's way of dealing with things.

God's method of dealing with problems is very different from that of the worlds.

*“<sup>1</sup>If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, <sup>2</sup>Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. <sup>3</sup>Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. <sup>4</sup>Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”* (Philippians 2:1-4)

God's method of dealing with problems is to consider the other person first. Treat other people the way that you want to be treated. If you don't want somebody to gossip about you, ignore you, make rude comments to you, yell at you, or make threats to you; then don't do those things to other people. All of those things satisfy the flesh, but they do not bring glory unto God.

God wants His people to love one another. When I am assembled with the saints I shouldn't feel like I'm in a room with my enemies. I shouldn't have the attitude that I wish someone wasn't here, or have a general dislike for someone. Instead, I should have a love for each person because they are in Christ. We have a common bond that is greater, and should have more meaning to us than anything this world holds. If we allow him, however, the Devil will destroy this church with division. There will be a hatred, a meanness that exists between the members; and one by one people will fall by the wayside.

The Devil wants to destroy this church with indifference.

*"<sup>14</sup>And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; <sup>15</sup>I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. <sup>16</sup>So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth. <sup>17</sup>Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."* (Revelation 3:14-17)

The letter that Christ wrote to the church at Laodicea, to me, is the most frightening. When you read all the letters you find that there were many problems in those churches. There were false teachers, false doctrines, immorality, lack of discipline, and discouragement. When you read the letter to Laodicea, however, none of those things are mentioned.

When you look at the letter from the viewpoint of the Laodiceans, everything was fine. In their eyes they were rich, and had need of nothing. They had plenty of people and plenty of resources. In their eyes they set the standard for others to follow, but Jesus said they were neither hot nor cold. They were lukewarm.

The members of the church at Laodicea were faithful as far as showing up to services and observing what was commanded. There was really nothing below the surface unfortunately. You see they looked good to the eyes of man, but God could see into their hearts. He knew that their hearts really weren't His. They were content to go through the motions and play church. They could fool others and they could probably even fool themselves to a certain extent, but they couldn't fool God.

When it came down to it, they loved other things more than they loved God. Sure they showed up when they were supposed to, and went through all the outward motions; but their hearts were not with God. They were indifferent. Friends, that's scary to me. It's scary because it could easily be this church. We may have shown up this morning and we are going

through all the motions of worship; but do our hearts really belong to God? Can we honestly say that we are committed to serving God? Do we have a love for Him? Are we willing to make any sacrifices necessary in order to serve Him, or do we love the things of this world more? Are we indifferent? If so, the Devil will use that to destroy this church.

The Devil wants to steal our goals of growth and success in the kingdom of Christ. He wants to keep us from bearing fruit. He wants us to focus on our failures, disabilities, and difficulties. The Devil wants us to use others as an excuse for not doing what we ought to do. He wants to destroy this church. *“The thief cometh not, but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”* (John 10:10) Jesus, however, wants to build us up and cause us to live.