

Lesson 21

GOD'S CALLED-OUT ASSEMBLY THE CHURCH

Ten Enemies of the Church

Jesus Christ is building His Church (Matthew 16:18), and the devil is seeking to tear it down and destroy it (compare 2 Peter 5:8--"the devil as a roaring _____, walketh about, seeking whom he may _____"). Those who are members of Christ's Church need to be **alert and wide awake**. As Christian soldiers we need to understand **the enemy** so that we can win the battles. Christ has already won the war (John 16:33) and we are overcomers in Him.

Read Acts 20:28-31. Why was Paul in tears (verse 31)? Why did Paul need to warn these believers? Was Paul concerned about the flock (the Church)? There are two ways that sheep can be killed. If the Shepherd does not feed the sheep they will die of starvation (verse 28). **Bible teaching is needed**. If the Shepherd does not protect the sheep from the W _____ (verse 29) then they will be slaughtered. **A warning ministry is needed**. The Church must be **alert and wide awake!**

In this lesson we want to study **Ten Enemies** that the Church faces today. There are more than ten, but these ten enemies are certainly some of the most dangerous ones.

ENEMY NUMBER 1--FALSE TEACHING

Peter spoke of the danger of false teaching: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be _____ among _____" (2 Peter 2:1). A false teacher is a person who teaches what is false. A true teacher is one who speaks "the _____ in love" (Ephesians 4:15). Unfortunately there are some teachers who are SPEAKING L _____ (1 Timothy 4:2 and see verse 1).

Most people are very careful about what they eat. Great harm can come to a person who eats or drinks the wrong things. Would you drink a glass of gasoline? _____ Would you eat a box of rat poison? _____ Once a wicked person put poison in some pills were later bought at a store. Some people swallowed these pills, unaware that they had been laced with poison. Some died because of this. The man who did this was a **killer!**

Did you know that there are people today going around and poisoning men's **souls**? Just as the body needs to be fed with healthy food, so the soul needs to be fed with healthy teaching. The Bible calls healthy teaching **sound doctrine** (see Titus 2:1). A good Pastor and a good teacher will feed believers with **healthy teaching** (good, wholesome food from the Word of God). A false teacher will feed people with **false teaching** (poison).

Where and how do false teachers do their work? Some speak on the radio or appear on television. Some write articles in magazines, in books, or on the Internet. Some false teachers stand behind

pulpits and teach people in churches. Some false teachers go from house to house and from door to door trying to talk to people and spread their lies. Some false teachers are sincere and they really think that they are helping people, but they are sincerely wrong. They are deceived (2 Tim. 3:13). Doctors once believed that sick people could be helped by putting leeches (blood suckers) on them. This was done to George Washington and it probably shortened his life. These doctors were sincere but they were sincerely wrong.

Here are some examples of false teaching which you can discuss in class:

- 1) All men will someday be saved and will be allowed to enter heaven.
- 2) A loving God would never punish people in hell.
- 3) Jesus Christ is the greatest angel that God ever created.
- 4) To be saved a person must keep the Ten Commandments.
- 5) It is possible for a person to fall into sin and lose his salvation.

Can you think of other examples of false teaching?

Believers need to be **alert**. What should we do when we hear something taught (even by our own Pastor and Sunday School teachers and parents)? The answer is found in Acts 17:11--" They received the _____ with all readiness of mind, and _____ the Scriptures _____, (to see) whether those things were so." When you are taught something, you should go to the Bible and see for yourself whether or not it is really what the Bible teaches. A fair question is always: "Where does it say that in the Bible?" If you are taught that a person is saved by believing in Jesus Christ, then you can search the Scriptures to see if this is really true. Is it true or false (Acts 16:30-31; John 3:16)? _____

Danger: Do not be poisoned by false teaching! Beware of anything that is contrary to what is taught in God's Word, the Bible.

ENEMY NUMBER 2--WORLDLINESS

Believers are not of the _____ (John 17:16) because they belong to the Saviour's kingdom. Unsaved people are **of the world** because they belong to Satan's system. The devil wants to draw believers away from the Saviour, and to draw them close to the world.

Consider Romans 12:2. Jesus wants to **transform us** (change us by working in our hearts), but Satan wants to **conform us** (squeeze us into the world's mold). For example, think about the kind of language that many of your classmates may use at school or on the playground. They may use bad language, swear, make fun of others, and tell dirty jokes. As a believer and as a member of the Church, you do not want to **conform** your language to theirs by allowing the same kind of filth to come out of your mouth. Instead you want the Saviour to **transform** your language so that you can enjoy the healthy use of your mind. Then unbelievers will be able to see that the language a Christian uses is good and wholesome and different. "Let no corrupt (filthy) communication

proceed out of your mouth" (Eph. 4:29). Don't let garbage come out of your mouth. Rather, speak the kind of language that will encourage and build up others (see the end of verse 29).

The worldly person is the person who ignores God and who leaves God out of his thinking. He does not consider God in his thoughts, and in his plans and in his actions. He lives as if there were no God in heaven. The average person does not give God very much thought during the day. The Christian believer must be different! God is the very center of His life, and he must include God in all of his thinking and plans and actions. When we live this way we are being a good witness, because we are **causing** others to realize that there is a God in heaven.

What does God think about **worldliness** (1 John 2:15-17 and James 4:4)? The more the Church becomes like the world, the more it will lose its **witness** and its **power**. Unsaved people will say, "Why do I need to become a Christian? The Christians that I know are **no different** than my other friends. They act like non-Christians, they talk like non-Christians, they think like non-Christians and I can't tell much of a difference. If Christians are no different than non-Christians, then why should I become a Christian?"

Or another unsaved person might think in this way: "I see nothing wrong with being a Christian because all of my Christian friends live the same way I do. I can be a Christian and still live and speak and think the same way I always do." Does this person really understand what it means to be a Christian?

Danger and duty: Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by Christ into the kind of person He wants you to be. Don't let the world conform you; let Christ transform you.

ENEMY NUMBER 3--LEGALISM

Legalism is a special kind of false teaching. In Acts 15:1 we see that legalism crept into the early church: "And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren and said, Except ye be _____ after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be _____." When you think of the word "**legalism**" you should think of the word "**law**." These people were saying that a person cannot be saved without keeping the law (being circumcised). Is this really true? To be saved, does a person need to be circumcised? According to Acts 16:30-31, what is the one and only thing that a person must do to be saved?

LEGALISM is dangerous because it gets a person to look away from what Jesus Christ has done on the cross. The person starts looking at what he can do. Legalism says that man must **do something** to get God's blessing and God's salvation. The Bible says that Christ has already done it all (John 19:30). It is not what I do that counts; it is what Christ has done! Legalism says, "***What Christ did on the cross is not enough. There are certain things which I must do also.***" The believer says, "***Jesus died for me! What He did is enough. It is not my anything that saves me; it is God's everything!***"

There are people today who say, "You cannot be saved unless you are baptized in water." Is this legalism? Why? There are people who say, "You cannot be saved unless you live a good life and try to keep the Ten Commandments." Is this trusting what Christ has done, or is this man trusting what he can do? _____

No one has ever been saved by keeping the law, but multitudes have been saved by trusting Jesus Christ and Him alone.

Danger: Do not let anyone get you to take your eyes off Jesus Christ and what He did for you on the cross.

For further study, see our paper on [LEGALISM--What It Is and What It Is Not](#).

ENEMY NUMBER 4--FORMALISM

Formalism is something that has outward form but no inward content. Formalism is like having a peanut shell without any peanut inside it. It looks like a peanut. It feels like a peanut, *but something very important is missing*. What good is a peanut shell without a nut inside? The peanut shell which has no nut may fool people, but it will never satisfy people. The same thing would be true of a banana peel without the banana. It may look like a banana but it is lacking the most important thing of all: the real and good part of the banana that you can eat!

There are people who are like the peanut shell and like the banana peel: "Having a _____ of godliness, but denying the _____ thereof" (2 Timothy 3:5). These people have an outward form that looks good and even fools many people, but they are missing the most important thing: **the inner life and power that only God can provide**.

Think about what Paul said in Romans 2:28-29. A person may be a Jew **outwardly**, but if he is not a Jew **inwardly**, then he is not really a true Jew. The same thing is true for a Christian. It is possible to be a Christian **outwardly**--to go to church, to carry a Bible, to bow the head in prayer, to open the hymnbook and sing, and to go through all the outward motions. This person could be just like the peanut shell--it looks good but there is no nut on the inside. Do you think that God wants more than just a "Christian shell"? If people could "open you up" and look on the inside, what would they see? Would they find a **true Christian** on the inside also? Would they find a heart that loves the Saviour? Would they find that when you sing you sing from the heart, and when you pray you pray from the heart with meaning and reality? It is not the shell that is important but the **inside!** God is concerned about the **heart**. "Behold, thou desirest _____ in the _____ parts" (Psalm 51:6). "For man looketh on the _____ but God looketh on the _____" (1 Samuel 16:7).

Read the last part of Mark 7:6. Did these people honor God **outwardly**? Did they give God "lip service"? _____ Did these people honor God **inwardly**? _____ Did they have a heart for God? _____

Danger: Beware of an outward form of religion without the inner power and reality that only God can give. Don't just go through the outward motions of being a Christian. Make sure your heart is right with the Lord. Make sure you are a **real Christian**, not just an **outward Christian**.

ENEMY NUMBER 5--EMOTIONALISM

Emotionalism is a problem when people are led by their **feelings** and **emotions** (being glad, sad,

mad, etc.) instead of being led by God's Word.

Most people are led and controlled by their feelings and emotions. When asked, "Why did you do that?" the common answer is, "Because I felt like it!" Feelings do not do very well in the driver's seat. Feelings come and feelings go. Feelings change and fluctuate. Bad feelings should point to the true problem, which is what causes the feelings. Usually the real problem has to do with the way a person lives. Bad feelings are usually the result of bad living or bad thinking. When the warning light flashes on your car's dashboard, it is telling you that there is a problem under the hood. Our feelings are like this flashing light.

Martin Luther once said: "**For feelings come and feelings go, and feelings are deceiving. My warrant is the Word of God, naught else is worth believing.**" God's unchanging Word must lead us and guide us. How I feel is not important. The important thing is this: **What has God said?**

There are many churches today that are swept up in emotionalism. If you were to walk into one of these churches you would see some very strange things: arms waving in the air, people making strange sounds which do not make any sense, different people speaking at the same time, and all kinds of movement and excitement. But in the middle of all this movement and excitement the Bible stays closed. The people do not stay quiet and still long enough for the Lord to speak to their hearts through His Word (compare 1 Kings 19:11-12).

Danger: Are you letting your feelings control you or are you letting God's Word control you? Do you go by your feelings or are you guided by what God has told you to do in His Word?

ENEMY NUMBER 6--DIVERSION

Suppose your Mom gives you \$5.00 and tells you to buy some groceries for her at the store. On the way to the store you see an ice cream store, so you turn in there and buy ice cream for yourself and for your friends. This is DIVERSION! You were diverted (turned aside) from doing what you were told to do and you failed to accomplish your mission.

In Mark 16:15 Jesus Christ gave the Church an assignment: "Go ye into all the _____ and _____ the _____ (good news) to every creature." Many churches have turned aside from doing this and they have done other things instead. Instead of preaching the good news about Christ and His salvation, they have concentrated on other things such as feeding the hungry, giving clothes to the poor, providing for those who are sick, helping those who are in need, etc. These are good things to do, but this is not the **main thing** that Christ told the Church to do. Food, clothes and good health are fine, but will these things get a person to heaven? _____ Consider two examples:

1. **The Salvation Army**--When the Salvation Army first started their ministry, they preached the gospel and also tried to help those who were poor and needy. As the years went by the Salvation Army helped the poor and needy more and more and preached the gospel less and less. Today the Salvation Army does **very little** preaching of the gospel. The main thing they are known for is not the preaching of the gospel, but rather the collection of money for the benefit of those in need (to provide clothing, food, Christmas gifts, etc.). They allowed themselves to become diverted from the **main thing** that Christ

told them to do.

William Booth had strong convictions about preaching the gospel:

I recall hearing William Booth, the first general of the Salvation Army, say, when explaining his "Darkest England" scheme, that its real objective was, not just the amelioration of social conditions, but first and foremost the bringing of men to repentance that their souls might be saved. I can recall the flash in his eye, and the noble bearing of his commanding figure as he exclaimed, "Take a man from the filth and squalor of the slums, exchange his rags for decent clothing, move him from the stifling stench of the city tenement to a neat little cottage in the pure air of the country, put him on his feet economically where he can make a decent living for himself and his family, and then let him die in his sins, unsaved, and be lost forever at last—really it is not worth while, and I, for one, would not attempt it." (Cited by Harry Ironside, *Except Ye Repent*, pages 181-182.)

2. **The YMCA**--The YMCA started out as a Christian organization (The Young Men's Christian Association). But as time went on the people in this organization gave more importance to other things and less importance to preaching the gospel. Today, if you want to swim or play basketball or get some good exercise and healthy activity, the YMCA is a great place to go. However, if you want to learn how to be saved and how to go to heaven, do not go to the YMCA. They have been diverted.

Danger: Do not fail to do the **main thing** that Christ has commanded His Church to do. The Church must not forget **why** she is in the world. We must clearly point to Christ and His wonderful salvation. We must not get involved with things that Christ never told us to get involved with. Are you involved in sharing the good news with others?

For further study see our paper on [**The Great Commission--What It Is NOT.**](#)

ENEMY NUMBER 7--COLDNESS

In Revelation chapter 2 we learn about a church which was about to have its light snuffed out (Revelation 2:5). What was the problem? What did these believers do wrong? Jesus said, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast _____ thy _____" (Revelation 2:4). Something terrible happened to these people. Something happened that cooled their love for the Saviour. They no longer loved Him as they once did. Their love for the Saviour had grown cold. Their relationship with Christ had slowly and gradually lost its warmth and beauty and freshness.

When a person is saved he enters into a love relationship with Christ Jesus: "We _____ Him because He first _____ us" (1 John 4:19). Once we are saved we need to keep our love for the Saviour burning bright and hot.

It is possible for other loves to come in and crowd out one's **first love**. Some people are "lovers of _____ more than lovers of _____" (2 Tim. 3:4). They would rather lie at the beach than sit in church. They would rather play than pray. They would rather read comics than read Corinthians.

Think of a husband and wife. If they never talked to each other and never did anything for each other and never spent time with each other, would they have a very good love relationship? _____ Jesus Christ wants to have **FIRST PLACE** in our lives (Col. 1:18).

Danger: Is your love for the Saviour growing cold? Can you remember a time in your Christian life when you were walking **closer** to the Lord than you are now? In some church buildings you will find an organ, a piano, a choir, people in the pews, a pastor, but the **Lord is missing**. The Lord does not **commend** but He **condemns** a church where He is unloved and where the hearts of the people have grown **cold** towards Him.

ENEMY NUMBER 8--TOLERATION

There are some things that we must not tolerate. Suppose a rattlesnake were to be found in a yard where small children often play. Should this snake be tolerated and allowed to remain in this yard? Suppose you were to learn that there was cancer in your body. Would you tolerate this cancer and let it stay there and grow there?

There are some things that the Church must not tolerate. In Revelation 2:2 we learn that there were people who claimed to be apostles. Were they really apostles? _____ They were **false apostles**. Did these Christians tolerate these liars and allow them to continue to fool people and mislead people? _____

Today there are churches that tolerate many things. There are churches that tolerate sin. If someone has a serious problem with sin, should not believers seek to help the person deal with the problem God's way? Instead they often ignore the problem and pretend that everything is all right. This is like ignoring the rattlesnake and pretending that there is no danger. [See 1 Corinthians chapter 5 where Paul told the Corinthians that they needed to deal with a man who had fallen into deep sin.]

Some churches allow unsaved people to be church members. Some allow unsaved people to preach from the pulpit. This is a very dangerous thing to do. This would be like a shepherd telling the wolf to watch the sheep for him while goes for a long walk. This is a fast way to destroy the flock!

Danger: The church must never tolerate that which is wrong. The church that fails to deal with sin in the right way will be the church that is destroyed by sin. The cancer that is not removed from the body is the cancer that destroys the body.

ENEMY NUMBER 9--DIVISION

Was the Corinthian church a **DIVIDED** church (1 Cor.1:10-12)? _____ These Christians were getting together and forming different groups within the church and each group thought they were better than the other group!

It is a terrible thing to see **family warfare** within the church. It is a terrible thing to see gossip, jealousy, pride, failure to love the brethren, etc. Such things cause division and harm. Christians

sometimes are so busy fighting each other that they have little time or energy left to battle the real enemies: **the world, the flesh and the devil!** How are Christians supposed to live with each other (see Ephesians 4:2-3; 31-32)?

Danger: If a person is a fellow Christian then he is supposed to be on the same team that you are on! **Be alert!** Love the brethren (1 John 3:14). Don't be one who sows discord and division among brethren. God **hates** this kind of thing (see Proverbs 6:16,19).

ENEMY NUMBER 10--CLOSED BIBLE

One of the great enemies that the Church faces today is the **closed Bible**. There are many churches where the Bible is used **very little**. The next time you see people walking to church see if they are carrying their Bibles. There are many people today who do not even bring a Bible to church. There are many Pastors who never encourage their people to open their Bibles and use them (by turning to different passages). In many churches the Bible is a closed Book.

According to 2 Timothy 4:2, what should be preached from the pulpit?

_____ There will come a time when people will not want
S _____ D _____ (see 2 Timothy 4:3). They will not want
healthy teaching! They will turn away their ears from the _____ (2 Timothy 4:4). Will their
teachers give them what they need to hear or what they want to hear (2 Timothy 4:3)?

_____ Sometimes the truth hurts! The truth is
like medicine. It does not always taste good, but we need it.

Danger: Is the Bible a closed Book in your church? Is the Bible a closed Book in your home? Is **your Bible** a closed Book or is it opened frequently? When do you use your Bible? When do you open your Bible? Do you open it only in church or at other times also? May God help us to have an **OPEN BIBLE** and an **OPEN HEART!**

