

## REACHING FORWARD - Part 2

### Enemies to Defeat

#### Int.

1. Aim: In reaching forward we must defeat the enemies who want to destroy us.
2. Phil. 3:13-14
  - a. Paul believed in moving ahead - not falling back
  - b. He believed we should not be satisfied with where we are presently - but we need to be moving forward
3. The Lord's church is described as a body, both in its life and its function
  - a. Romans 12:4-5 "For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another."
  - b. Bodies are designed to live, act, and to work
    - i. It is natural for the body to function in such a way that life today promotes life tomorrow
    - ii. The same is true for the church - life today promotes life tomorrow
  - c. The body also has enemies that can damage or even kill it
    - i. Diseases
    - ii. Accidents
4. Likewise, the church has enemies that can keep it from moving into the future
  - a. There are enemies that can damage/cripple the church
  - b. There are enemies that can kill the church
5. Therefore, we must be ready to fight these enemies if the church is going to move forward

## Discussion

### I. THE ENEMY OF IGNORANCE

#### A. Ignorance comes in many forms

1. Isaiah 45:20 "Assemble yourselves and come; Draw near together, You who have escaped from the nations. They have no knowledge, Who carry the wood of their carved image, And pray to a god that cannot save."
  - a. Here we have reference to the ignorance of the pagans who make his god out of a tree
  - b. Today ignorance is shown in many by their worshiping of nature, crystals, idols, ancestors, etc. - Ignorant Worship
  
2. Jeremiah 5:21 "Hear this now, O foolish people, Without understanding, Who have eyes and see not, And who have ears and hear not:"
  - a. This is stubborn ignorance - refusing to listen to God
  - b. Many today simply refuse to see-they refuse to hear
  
3. Hosea 4: 6 "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children."
  - a. They were specifically ignorant of the word of God
  - b. This was going to destroy them ... today as well

## B. Ignorance is a real problem

1. Causes us to follow the wrong path ...
  - a. I saiah 59:8 "The way of peace they have not known, And there is no justice in their ways; They have made themselves crooked paths; Whoever takes that way shall not know peace."
  - b. There are many paths - but only one path to heaven
2. Causes us not to do right ...
  - a. Amos 3:10 "For they do not know to do right,' Says the LORD, 'Who store up violence and robbery in their palaces."
  - b. We can do no better than we know
3. Causes God's wrath to come upon us - Zechariah 7:11-12 "But they refused to heed, shrugged their shoulders, and stopped their ears so that they could not hear. 12 "Yes, they made their hearts like flint, refusing to hear the law and the words which the LORD of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets. Thus great wrath came from the LORD of hosts."
4. Causes us to be lost - Matthew 13:15 "For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.'" "
5. Causes us to please ourselves - not God - Romans 10:3 "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God."

C. How do we defeat this enemy of ignorance?

1. Heed the words of the Psalmist - Psalm 119:97 "Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day."
2. 1 Timothy 4:13 "Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine."
3. 2 Timothy 2:15 "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. "
4. Knowledge is the way to defeat ignorance !

## **II. THE ENEMY OF UNBELIEF**

A. Many do realize this, but unbelief is a problem for both the saved and the unsaved

1. John 8:24
  - a. This is a simple fact - people will die in their sins unless they believe in Jesus
  - b. It is a matter of life and death
2. 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: 4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."
  - a. It is a terrible thing to be blind - more terrible to be spiritually blind, to be plagued with unbelief
  - b. Satan can blind people to the glory of the gospel, and thus, groping in unbelief

3. Hebrews 3:12 " Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;"
  - a. Normally we think of the unsaved as being unbelievers
  - b. The Hebrew writer is here addressing his brethren

B. Unbelief can keep the church from moving forward

1. How might unbelief affect us?
  - a. If a person knows God's word; and yet, does not believe it, what value will it be in their lives?
    - (1) There will be no desire for obedience
    - (2) They will see no need for obedience
  - b. Many, evidently, do not believe that God cares how they live
  - c. Some do not believe that God has a plan to save
  - d. Some do not believe that it matters how we worship
  - e. Evidently, many do not believe that it matters how committed we are
2. We should be like the man who cried out to Jesus
  - a. Mark 9:24 "Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"
  - b. Someone once said, "Be great believers. Little faith will bring your souls to heaven, but great faith will bring heaven to your souls."

### III. THE ENEMY OF APATHY

- A. A wife once asked her husband, "Do you think the world's problems are caused by ignorance or apathy?" The husband replied, "I don't know and I don't care."
- B. Apathy is very similar to the attitude expressed by the church in Laodicea, for which Jesus condemned
1. Revelation 3:15-16
  2. They were lukewarm, they were lacking passion - they were unconcerned
- C. The Bible very plainly condemns apathy and neglect:
1. Judges 5:23 - neglecting their duties ... would not help God's people ... they were apathetic "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the LORD, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty."
  2. Isaiah 32:9 - they were at ease, careless, apathetic "Rise up, ye women that are at ease; hear my voice, ye careless daughters; give ear unto my speech."
  3. Jeremiah 48:10 - neglecting their duties "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the LORD deceitfully, and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood."
  4. Amos 6:1 - at ease, apathetic "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!"
  5. Matthew 7:26 - hears and does not "And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:"
  6. James 2:14 - faith without works cannot save
  7. James 4:17

D. How does apathy destroy us?

1. Causes us to be lukewarm about the church - its purity, its doctrines, and its worship
2. Causes us to be lukewarm about lost souls
3. Causes us to be lukewarm about righteousness
4. Friends, apathy is an enemy of the church

**IV. THE ENEMY OF SIN**

A. This is the most obvious enemy, but sin happens to people who don't know, don't believe and who don't care

1. Ignorance, unbelief, and apathy all lead to sin
2. If the church practices sin, how can we remain the church?
3. Ephesians 5:25-27

B. Notice what the Bible has to say about the enemy of sin

1. Hebrews 12:1 "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,"
  - a. A runner does not run a race hampered by weights
  - b. Sin hampers our Christian race
2. Hebrews 3:12-13
  - a. We need each other to help avoid having a heart hardened by sin
  - b. If it happens - sin will cause us to leave God

3. James 5:19-20 "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; 20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."
  - a. The error of sin can kill the soul
  - b. We need each other to stay on the right track

## **CONCLUSION**

1. For the church to move forward, we must recognize and defeat our enemies
2. Four great enemies of the church are:
  - (1) Ignorance
  - (2) Unbelief
  - (3) Apathy
  - (4) Sin
3. These are all enemies that we can do something about.
4. Are you under attack today? FIGHT!!

---

Sermon by Arthur Pigman - Sunday Evening Jan. 3, 2010  
Evans Church of Christ  
515 Gibbs Road  
Evans, Ga. 30809  
706-855-1249  
evanscoc@bellsouth.net  
www.evansgachurchofchrist.org