

428 The Church Moving Forward ENEMIES WE FACE

TEXT: Rom 12:4-5

Introduction

- A. Bodies are designed to live, to act, to work.
- B. It is natural for the body to function in such a way that life today promotes life tomorrow.
- C. The same is true for the church --- life today promotes life tomorrow.

- B. The body has enemies that can damage or even kill it.
 - 1. Disease.
 - 2. Accidents.
 - 3. Self-destruction (Aids , autoimmune problem)

- C. Likewise, the church has enemies that can keep it from moving into the future.
 - 1. Enemies that can damage or cripple it.
 - 2. Enemies that can kill it.
 - 3. Therefore, we must be ready to fight the enemies if we are to move forward.

- D. Today I want us to look at four such enemies so that we can avoid being a target

I. THE ENEMY OF IGNORANCE

- A. Ignorance comes in many forms.
 - 1. Isa 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. religious ignorance of the pagan who makes his god from a tree.
 - b. today -- same: worship nature, crystals, idols, ancestors, etc.
 - 2. Jer 5:21 Hear this now, O foolish people, without understanding, who have eyes and see not, and who have ears and hear not:
 - a. stubborn ignorance -- refuse to listen to God.
 - b. won't see, hear -- think?
 - 3. Hosea 4:1-2, 6 Hear the word of the LORD, you children of Israel, for the LORD brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land: ""There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying, killing and

stealing and committing adultery, they break all restraint, with bloodshed upon bloodshed. (NKJ) 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. specifically, ignorance of God's word.
- b. it is possible to be destroyed by our own lack of knowledge.

B. What ignorance can do:

1. Cause us to miss salvation.
2. Cause us to miss obeying God's will.
3. Cause us to practice religion instead of biblical faith.
4. Cause us to build monuments to ourselves instead of God.
5. Cause us to miss God's purpose for us in the world.

II. THE ENEMY OF UNBELIEF

A. Unbelief is a problem for both the saved and the unsaved.

1. John 8:24.
 - a. this is the simple fact -- people will die in their sins unless they believe in Jesus Christ.
 - b. it is a matter of life and death.
2. 2 Cor 4:3-4.
 - a. It is a terrible thing to be blind -- more terrible to be spiritually blind.
 - b. Satan can blind people to the glory of the gospel.
3. Heb 3:12.
 - a. Normally we only think of the unsaved as being unbelievers.
 - b. The Hebrew writer addressed himself to his brethren

B. Unbelief can keep the church from moving forward.

1. How might unbelief affect us?.
 - a. we might know, but not believe, God's word.
 - b. we might not believe that God cares how we live.
 - c. we might not believe that God has a plan to save the world.
 - d. we might not believe it matters how we worship.
 - e. we might not believe it matters how committed we are.

2. We should be like the man who cried out to Jesus Mark 9:24 Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!
3. Charles Spurgeon "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 man asked his wife, "Do you think the world's problems are caused by ignorance or apathy?" She 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 soundly condemned them- Rev 3:15-16.
 - a. well what is apathy = lacking passion; blah.
 - b. in a word -- lukewarm
- C. How apathy can destroy us.
 1. Causes us to be lukewarm about the church.
 2. Causes us to be lukewarm about reaching the lost.
 3. Causes us to be lukewarm about righteousness.
 4. Causes us to be lukewarm about practicing the fruit of the Spirit

IV. THE ENEMY OF SIN

- A. This may be the most obvious enemy, but sin happens to people who don't know, don't believe and/or don't care.
 1. Ignorance, Unbelief, Apathy -- all lead to sin.
 2. If the church practices sin, how can we remain the church?
- B. Consider just a few verses.
 1. Heb 12:1.
 - a. a runner does not run a race hampered by weights.
 - b. neither can we run the race of life hampered and weighted down by sin.
 2. Heb 3:12-13.
 - a. one of the reasons we need each other is that we can help each other avoid having our hearts hardened by sin.
 - b. if that happens, sin can cause us to leave God.
 3. James 5:19-20.

- a. the error of sin can kill the soul.
- b. again, we need each other to help stay on the right track

CONCLUSION

A. For the church to move forward, we must recognize and defeat our enemies

1. Long time ago, Pogo, the comic strip character said it: "We have seen the enemy, and he is us."
2. Other people, the government, economics, religious prejudice, and a host of others may work against the church, but the most dangerous enemy of all lies within ourselves

B. The four enemies are:

1. Ignorance.
2. Unbelief.
3. Apathy.
4. Sin.

•C. All of these are enemies that we can do something about.

•D. Are you under attack today? Fight! Do not lose the battle. Enlist help.

•E. Invitation