



The Accuser Of The Brethren

Rev 12:1-12

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven;

a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet,

and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

And she being with child cried,

travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

And there appeared another wonder in heaven;

and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns,

and seven crowns upon his heads.

And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven,

and did cast them to the earth:

and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered,

for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

And she brought forth a man child,

who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

And the woman fled into the wilderness,

where she hath a place prepared of God,

that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

And there was war in heaven:

Michael and his angels fought against the dragon;

and the dragon fought and his angels,

And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

And the great dragon was cast out,

that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world:

he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven,

Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God,

and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down,

which accused them before our God day and night.
And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb,
and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.
Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them.
Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea!
for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath,
because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

More churches have been destroyed by the accuser of the brethren and its faultfinding than by either immorality or misuse of church funds. So prevalent is this influence in our society that, among many, faultfinding has been elevated to the status of a "ministry." "The Lord has promised, however, that in His house accusing one another will be replaced with prayer, and faultfinding with a love that covers a multitude of sins.

Satan Wants to Stop Your Growth

I am preaching today specifically to expose the activity of the accuser of the brethren among born-again Christians. There are individuals who are trapped in cults where mind-control and deception are involved; I am not dealing with the uniqueness of their problems in this message. Instead, my goal is to see the living church delivered from the stronghold of faultfinding and to have our hearts turned instead to prayer.

In an attempt to hinder if not altogether halt the next move of God, Satan has set forth an army of faultfinding demons against the church. The purpose of this assault is to entice the body of Christ away from the perfection of Jesus and onto the imperfections of one another.

The faultfinder spirit's assignment is to assault relationships on all levels. It attacks families, churches and interchurch associations, seeking to bring irreparable schisms into our unity. *Masquerading as discernment, this spirit will slip into our opinions of other people, leaving us critical and judgmental.* Consequently, we all need to evaluate our attitude toward others. If our thoughts are other than "faith working through love," we need to be aware that we may be under spiritual attack.

The faultfinder demon will incite individuals to spend days and even weeks unearthing old faults or sins in their minister or church. The people who are held captive by this deceitful spirit become "crusaders," irreconcilable enemies of former acquaintances. In most cases the things they deem wrong or lacking are the very areas in which the Lord seeks to position them for intercession. What might otherwise be an opportunity for spiritual growth and meeting a need becomes an occasion of stumbling and withdrawal. In truth, their criticisms are a smoke screen for a prayerless heart and an unwillingness to serve.

That someone should discover the imperfections of their pastor or church is by no means a sign of spirituality. Indeed, we are able to find fault with the church *before* we were Christians! What we do with what we see, however, is the measure of Christlike maturity. Remember, when Jesus saw the condition of mankind, He "emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant....." He humbled Himself by becoming obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:7-8). He died to take away sins; He did not just judge them.

No One Is Exempt

It is of some consolation that Christ Himself could not satisfy the "standards" of this spirit when it spoke through the Pharisees. No matter what Jesus did, the Pharisees found fault with Him.

If you personally have not consulted with and listened to the individual of whom you are critical, how can you be sure that you are not fulfilling the role of the accuser of the brethren? Even the Law does not judge a man, unless it first hears from him.

John 7:51

Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?

The enemy's purpose in this assault is to discredit the minister so it can discredit his message. I have personally listened to scores of pastors from many different groups and backgrounds, and I have found that the timing of this spirit's attack upon their congregations was almost always just prior to or immediately after a significant breakthrough. The unchallenged assault of this demon *always* stopped the forward progress of their church.

When this spirit infiltrates an individual's mind, its accusations come with such venom and intimidation that even those who should know better are bewildered and then seduced by its influence. Nearly all involved take their eyes off Jesus and focus on "issues," ignoring during the contention that Jesus is actually praying for His body to become one. Beguiled by this demon, accusations and counter accusations riffle through the soul of the congregation, stimulating suspicion and fear among the people. Devastation wracks the targeted church, while discouragement blankets and seeks to destroy the pastor and his family or other servants of God in the church.

Nearly every person in the church has faced the assault of the faultfinder spirit at one time or another. Everyone that has ever faced it has known the depression of trying to track down this accusing spirit as it whispers its gossip through the local church: Trusted friends seem distant, established relationships are shaken, and the vision of the church is quagmired in strife and inaction.

this enemy is not limited to attacks on local churches. Its attacks are also citywide and national. Major publishers have made millions of dollars selling defaming books which are hardly more credible than gossip columns in the tabloids. Yes, in a few of the ministries there was serious sin, but there are biblical ways to bring correction, ways which lead to healing and not to destruction. Instead we find church leaders boldly challenging other church leaders; newsletters and cassette tapes that are so divisive circulate like poison through the bloodstream of the body of Christ, and how the church seems to gluttonously eat it up!

To mask the diabolical nature of its activity, the faultfinder will often garb its criticisms in religious clothing. Under the pretense of protecting sheep from a "gnat-sized" error in some issue or other, it forces the flock to swallow a "camel-sized" error of loveless correction. Attempting to correct violations of Scripture, the very methods employed are a violation of Scripture. where is the "Spirit of meekness....." of which Paul speaks in Galatians 6:1, the humility in "considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted"? Where is the love motive to "restore such a one...."?

In most cases the person supposedly in error has never even been contacted before his alleged mistakes enter the rumor mill of the land's churches. Only then, after the slander has been made public through whatever means, does he become aware of his alleged faults. Brethren, the spirit behind such accusations must be discerned, for its motive is not to restore and heal, but to destroy.

The Pure Example

The church needs correction, but the ministry of reproof must be patterned after Christ and not the accuser of the brethren. When Jesus corrected the churches in Asia, (Rev. 2-3), He sandwiched His rebuke between praise and promises. He reassured the churches that the voice about to expose their sin was the very voice which inspired their virtue. After encouraging them, He then brought correction.

Even when a church was steeped in error, as was the case with two of the seven churches, Christ still offered grace for change. How patient was Jesus? He even gave "Jezebel.....time to repent" (Rev. 2:20-21). After He admonished a church, His last words were not condemnation but promises.

Is this not His way with each of us? Even in the most serious corrections the voice of Jesus is always the embodiment of "grace and truth" (John 1:14). Jesus said of the sheep, "They know my voice, and a stranger they will not follow." (John 10:4-5). Remember, if the word of rebuke or correction does not offer grace for restoration, it is not the voice of your Shepherd. If you are one of His sheep, you will flee from it!

The Enemy's Weapons

To find an indictment against the church, it is important to note the enemy must draw his accusations from hell. If we have repented of our sins, no record of them nor of our mistakes exists in heaven. As it is written, "Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies....." (Rom. 8:33). Jesus is not condemning us but is perpetually interceding for us as the consummate sacrifice!

We need to expose the weapons of the faultfinder. The first is our actual sins. Our failure to repent when the Holy Ghost desires to correct us opens the door for the accuser to condemn us. The voice of the enemy never offers

hope nor extends grace for repentance. It acts as though it is the voice of God and we are guilty of the "Unpardonable sin." The way to defeat the enemy in this arena is to disarm him by sincerely repenting of the sin, looking again to the atonement of Jesus Christ as the sum of all our righteousness.

Yet Satan seeks not only to accuse us as individuals but to blend into our minds criticisms and condemnation against others as well. Instead of praying for one another, we react in the flesh against offenses. Our un-Christ-like responses are then easily manipulated by the faultfinder spirit.

Therefore, we cast down the accuser of the brethren by learning to *pray for* one another instead of *preying on* one another. We must learn to forgive in the same manner as Christ has forgiven us. If one has repented of his sins, we must exercise the same attitude of "divine forgetfulness" that exists in heaven. We defeat the faultfinder when we emulate the nature of Jesus: as a lamb, Christ died for sinners; as a priest, He intercedes.

The second weapon this demon uses against us is our past mistakes and poor decisions. Each of us has an inherent propensity toward ignorance. One does not have to read far into the history of the saints to discover they were not called because of their intrinsic wisdom. In truth, we all have made mistakes. Hopefully we have at least learned from them and developed humility because of them. This faultfinding demon, however, takes our past mistakes and parades them before our memory, criticizing our efforts to do God's will, thus keeping us in bondage to the past.

When the enemy pits us against one another, it first provokes us to jealousy or fear. The security of our place in life seems threatened by another's success. Perhaps to justify our personal failures or flaws, we magnify the past shortcomings of others. The more our jealousy grows the more this demon exploits our thoughts, until *nothing* about the individual or his church seems right.

In the final stage we actually wage a campaign against him. No defense he offers will satisfy us. We are convinced he is deceived and dangerous; and we think it is up to us to warn others. Yet the truth is the person whose mind is controlled by the faultfinder demon is the one who is deceived and dangerous. His own unrepentant thoughts toward jealousy and fleshly criticism have supplied hell with a "lumber yard" of material to erect walls between members of the body of Christ.

Sadly, it is often leaders who fall from the intensity of their first love and become the fiercest persecutors of others who are moving in the Holy Ghost. Jesus' disciples will be persecuted, but I cannot find any biblical authorization for Christian's to persecute others. Persecution is a deed of the flesh. "But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also" (Gal. 4:29). Incredibly, those who are given to persecuting others often actually think they are "offering service to God..." (John 16:2).

To combat this enemy we must create an atmosphere of grace among us as individuals and between us as churches. Like the Father who has given us life, we must seek to cause all things to work together for good. If one stumbles we must be quick to cover him, without condoning hypocrisy, for we are "members of one another" (Eph. 4:25).

Lev 18:6,10

None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him.

to uncover their nakedness: I am the LORD.

The nakedness of thy son's daughter, or of thy daughter's daughter, even their nakedness thou shalt not uncover: for theirs is thine own nakedness.

We are family, begotten from on Father. Even under the old covenant it was unlawful to uncover another's mistake publicly. Love finds a redemptive way to cover a multitude of sins.

Where The Vultures Are Gathered

The accuser uses yet another weapon, and it uses this weapon astutely. There are times in our walk with God when, to increase fruitfulness, the Father prunes us back. This is a season of preparation during which the Lord's purpose is to lead His servants into new power in ministry. This growth process requires new levels of surrender as well as a fresh crucifixion of the flesh. It is often a time of humiliation and testing, of emptiness and seeming

ineffectiveness as God expands our dependency upon Him. It can be a fearful time when our need is exposed in stark visibility.

Unfortunately, this time of weakness is apparent not only to the man or woman of God; it frequently occurs before the church and before principalities and powers as well. The faultfinder spirit, and those who have come to think as it thinks, find in their target's vulnerability an opportunity to crush him.

Time and again, what would otherwise become an incubator of life becomes a coffin of death. Those who might otherwise emerge with the clarity and power of prophetic vision are beaten down and abandoned, cut off from the very people who should have prayed them through to resurrection. In this attack the faultfinder spirit is most destructive. For here this demon aborts the birth of mature ministries, those who would arm their churches for war!

The faultfinders and gossips are already planted in the church: Perhaps you are such a one! When the living God is making your pastor more deeply dependent, and thus more easily shaped for His purposes, do you criticize his apparent lack of anointing? Although he did not abandon you during your time of need, do you abandon him now when your faith might be the very encouragement he needs to yield to the cross?

Those who are sympathetic to the accuser of the brethren fulfill, by application, *Matt. 24:28: "Wherever the body is, there will the vultures gather together."* The backbiting of these vulture-like individuals actually feeds their lower nature, for they seek what is dead in a church: they are *attracted* to what is dying.

Eventually these faultfinders depart, instinctively looking to take issue with some other church.

Jude 1:16-19

These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.

But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ:

How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.

These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.

They leave behind former brethren severely wounded and in strife, and a pastor greatly disheartened. Soon they join a new church, and in time God begins to deal with this new pastor. Once again the faultfinder spirit manifests itself, strategically positioned to destroy another church.

Today God is seeking to raise up His servants with increased power and authority. In the pruning stage of their growth, will we water their dryness with prayer, or will we be vultures drawn to devour their dying flesh?

How To Correct

When the accuser comes, it brings distorted facts and condemnation. Those who are trapped by this spirit never research the virtues in the person or thing they are attacking. With the same zeal that the faultfinders seek to unearth sin, those who will conquer this enemy must earnestly seek God's heart and His calling for those they would reprove. True correction, therefore, will proceed with *reverence*, not *revenge*. Think about it! Are not those whom we seek to correct, in fact, the servants of the Lord? Are they not His possession? Is it possible the works of which we are jealous, and thus critical, might be the very works of the Lord? Also let us ask ourselves: Why has God chosen *us* to bring His rebuke? Are we walking in Christ's pattern?

These are important questions, for to be anointed with Christ's authority to rebuke, we must be committed to men with Christ's love. But if we are angry, embittered or jealous toward another, we cannot even pray correctly for that person, much less reprove him. Jesus, the great Lion of Judah was declared worthy to bring forth judgment by virtue of His nature: He was a Lamb slain for men's sin. *If we are not determined to die for men, we have no right to judge them.*

Those who seek to justify leaving a church must not do so simply through finding fault. Rather we should openly communicate with ethics and principle. Our attitude should be one of prayer and love, leaving a blessing for what we gained for our time spent in the church. If there has indeed been sin in the ministry, we should leave the situation in the able and merciful hands of the Lord, in order that our hand remain clean and free of the blood-guiltiness

of the assassination of a man of God.

We should never base our opinion of a church or a person, by the testimony of the person who just left it. If people join us and bring with them a spirit of bitterness for whatever cause, that root of bitterness will spring up in your church, and many will be defiled. Therefore, no matter how much you need new members, never build the congregation with individuals who are unreconciled to past things.

The Lord's word to us is that in the house of the Lord criticism must be replaced with prayer, and faultfinding eliminated with a covering love. Where there is error, we must go with a motive to restore. Where there are wrong doctrines, we need to maintain a gentle spirit, correcting those in opposition.

We need to be delivered from and healed from the effects of the demonic stronghold of the accuser of the brethren!