

Defiling the Church With Impurity

by Zac Poonen

The sermon warns against the spirit of antichrist that seeks to defile the holy place and encourages disregard of the covenant, leading to corruption and failure in the church, and calls believers to remain faithful to God's standards.

Scripture: 1 John 2:18

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Holiness Matters"

Description

Zac Poonen preaches about the warnings in the last days regarding the spirit of the antichrist infiltrating the church, defiling the holy place, and leading believers astray by encouraging a disregard for God's covenant. He emphasizes the importance of standing firm in holiness and righteousness, even in the face of opposition and persecution, as Satan's aim is to corrupt God's sanctuary from within. Poonen urges the church to be vigilant against the forces of the antichrist and to preserve God's standards at any cost, following the example of Jesus in enduring hostility and opposition from those who seek to compromise the truth.

Transcript

"The e forces (of the antichrist) will defile the holy place and put a stop to the daily sacrifices.....He will flatter those who disregard the covenant of God, and thus win them over to his side. "But the people who know their God will be strong and do great things. And those with spiritual understanding will have a wide ministry of teaching in those days. But they will be in constant danger, many of them dying by fire and sword, or being jailed and robbed. "Eventually these pressures will subside, and some ungodly men will come, pretending to offer a helping hand, only to take advantage of them. And some who are the most gifted in the things of God will stumble in those days and fall. (Dan.11:31-35 - Living).

This is a passage that refers to the last days, and so there are many warnings that can be found therein for the church - for the spirit of the antichrist will be found even within the church (1 Jn. 2:18-19).

The spirit of the antichrist seeks to "defile the holy place" (Dan.11:31). There is tremendous opposition to the message of holiness and righteousness from Satan. The spirit of the antichrist also encourages "disregard of the covenant" (Dan.11:32). The new covenant promises a life of victory over sin. But the antichrist tells believers that it is impossible to live such a life. The main reason why our own ministry as a church has been opposed in the last two decades throughout India, has been because we have preached holiness and righteousness. We have proclaimed the fact that "sin need not be master over us any longer"

(Rom.6:14), that "those who love money cannot love God" (Lk.16:13), that "those who are angry with and despise others are guilty enough to go to hell" (Matt.5:22), that "those who lust after women with their eyes are also in danger of perishing in hell" (Matt.5:28-29), etc., Since these words of Jesus are unpalatable to the vast majority of believers, they have opposed us. We have stood against the unScriptural salary system for Christian workers (something that was unheard of in the first century) and the unScriptural begging for money that characterises Christian work in India. This has earned us the wrath of those who make a living through their preaching, and who build their private empires thereby. We have also stood against personality cults in the church, popery, denominationalism, Western domination of churches in India, and the unhealthy dependence on Western leadership that has hindered the development of the church here. This has infuriated the cultistic groups.

Satan's aim is to corrupt God's sanctuary in one way or the other. He places his "forces" (Dan.11:31) within the church, in order to destroy God's work from within. The history of Christendom reveals how these forces have succeeded in corrupting group after group, and movement after movement, through all these 20 centuries. The main reason for the church's failure has been that the watchmen whom God appointed in the church did not remain alert and awake. How did Satan succeed in putting these watchmen to sleep? In some cases, by making them afraid to speak the truth lest they offend some people - especially the rich and the influential. In some other cases, by making them wife-pleasers, and lovers of money and of good food. In some cases, the watchmen themselves got tired of facing constant opposition to their message, as they sought to maintain God's standards in the church, and so they toned down their messages to please men.

In Hebrews 12:3, we are told to consider Jesus "Who endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that we may not grow weary and lose heart". Who were these sinners who opposed Jesus? They were not the prostitutes or the murderers or the thieves in Israel. Nor were they the Romans or the Greeks. No. The sinners who opposed Jesus constantly were the Bible-thumping preachers and religious leaders in Israel. They were jealous of Jesus and finally killed Him.

If we follow Jesus, we will face opposition from the same group of people even today. Our greatest opposition will come from the preachers who have lowered God's standards and corrupted the church. These will be Satan's chief agents to oppose us. It is very easy for us to get tired of facing this constant opposition, and to get discouraged. Satan tries to "wear down the saints of God through persecution" (Dan.7:25). The only way to overcome is by looking at the example of Jesus Who faced opposition constantly, until He was killed by His enemies. We too must be willing to "be faithful unto death". Any preacher who is unwilling to face opposition until the end of his life, will end up as an ear-tickling preacher, who will "flatter people to win them over to his side" (Dan.11:32), and end his days as a compromising Balaam.

Our calling as a church is to preserve God's standards at any cost in our midst. We have to be on guard against the forces of the antichrist at all times. Paul had preserved the church in Ephesus in purity, by God's grace, during the three years that he was there. But he told the elders when he was leaving that he was certain that corruption would come in, after his departure (Acts 20:29-31). And sure enough, it did, as we read in the Second letter to the Ephesians (Rev.2:1-5).

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