

Preserving the Church From Satan's Agents

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of preserving the church from Satan's agents through unity, humility, and a commitment to restoration.

Scripture: Psalm 127:1, Psalm 133:1, Zephaniah 3:11-12, Matthew 16:18, Matthew 18:17-20, Romans 16:17, 1 Corinthians 3:19, 2 Corinthians 2:11, Jude 1:4

Topics: "Church Unity", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes the church's role in resisting Satan's agents, highlighting that true churches, built by Jesus, overpower the gates of hell and must remain vigilant against spiritual death manifested through jealousy, strife, and immorality. He warns against allowing carnal believers to hold positions of influence, as they can disrupt the unity and purity of the church. Poonen illustrates how God sometimes allows infiltrators to expose and cleanse the church, ensuring that only humble and lowly individuals remain. He stresses the importance of addressing sin within the church with the goal of restoration, rather than exclusion, and encourages believers to pray for unity and purity. Ultimately, the church must be a place of refuge and life, where the Holy Spirit works to maintain its integrity against Satan's schemes.

Transcript

Jesus said that the church He builds has one identifying mark : It overpowers the gates of hell (the forces of spiritual death). On the other hand, if a church is itself overcome by the forces of spiritual death - that is, by jealousy, or strife, or a competitive-spirit, or by honour-seeking, or immorality, or the love of money, or worldliness, or by bitterness, or pride, or arrogance, or Pharisaism, etc., then we can be certain that that is NOT the church that Jesus is building. There are carnal believers in every church who are slaves to these sins. But they must forever be kept on the periphery (in the outer court), so that they are given no ministry, or responsibility, or power in the church. None of us should ever be a part of any church that does not seek to battle these evils constantly.

Satan perpetually seeks to destroy the church. And most of the time, he tries to do this by infiltrating into the church through his agents. Jude speaks of "certain people who have crept into the church unnoticed" (v.4). Like the Gibeonites who deceived Joshua (Josh.9), there are many today who have deceived the elders and pretended to be disciples and crept into the midst of the churches unnoticed. But how did these people manage to deceive the elders? Perhaps because the elders were overawed or bribed by their wealth or their worldly position. In all Babylonian denominations, it is the people who have worldly position

or wealth who are able to influence the decisions taken in their group, even if they are not elders. But it must never be so in our midst. If we are not careful however, the Gibeonites will come into the church too. God may sometimes allow these people who have "crept in unnoticed", to be in the church for a period, to give them time to repent and to be converted. At times, He may also allow these infiltrators to fulfil the task that Lucifer fulfilled in the third heaven ages ago. Lucifer dragged away one-third of the angels with him, when he rebelled and fell away (Rev.12:4) - and thus the third heaven was cleansed of all rebellious elements. So today also, the Lord allows self-seeking people to come into the church, so that when they leave, they can take other insincere people along with them, and thus cleanse the church of all rebellious elements! This is part of God's wonderful wisdom.

We can see an example of this, from what the Lord has done again and again in the various churches. He has wonderfully and deftly arranged circumstances, and exposed and removed from our midst those who sought position in the church, and who had a divisive and a controversial spirit (See Rom.16:17). He has caught the clever people and the big people who came into our midst "in their own craftiness" (1 Cor.3:19) and thus frustrated their secret plans to "hijack" the church!! This is a mark of the Lord's care for us, and of His intense desire that there should be a pure, untainted testimony for His Name in our land. We praise the Lord that He watches over us constantly to preserve us from such Satanic attacks. "Unless the Lord guards the city, the watchmen keep awake in vain" (Psa.127:1) It is only where brothers dwell together in unity that the Lord can command His blessing (Psa.133:1) - and only a united church can triumph over the gates of Hell. So the Holy Spirit works mightily in our midst, to preserve us in that unity. Now we must be alert and pray that the Lord will continue to do this work in the future too. His perpetual promise to us is: "I will remove from your midst the proud, exulting ones,.....and I will leave among you a humble, lowly people, who take refuge in the Name of the Lord" (Zeph.3:11,12). The church can be built in unity only with humble, lowly people.

It is not our task to drive anyone away from the church with human zeal - for "the anger of man cannot achieve the righteousness of God" (Jas.1:20). No. Our task is to receive all who come to us, and to show them the way of life. But the Lord is jealous to preserve His church in purity, and so He Himself will expose and remove self-seeking people in His own way and in His own time, just like He drove the money-changers out of the temple at the right time.

Jesus spoke in Matthew 18:17-20 of a brother who sins and thus brings defilement into the church. We must remember that such a brother is usually not aware of the fact that he has become a tool in Satan's hands. Jesus therefore said that we must go and speak to him privately at first, in order to WIN HIM. That is always our aim: To win the brother - to win him away from Satan, and for the Lord and for His church. If he does not listen, we must try to win him again, this time with one or two more brothers. If he still does not listen, then we must tell the church about him. And if he does not listen even to the church, then he must be put out of fellowship, so that he can see his own need and repent, and so that others are not defiled by his spirit.

We must be strong in the Lord to pray and bind these workings of Satan, so that God's work in the churches proceeds unhindered. We must also learn to forgive every brother quickly and totally, so that Satan does not get any advantage over our own lives(2 Cor.2:11).

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