

The Christian Church And Individual Christians Have Many Enemies To Resist

Revelation 21:1-5 [NIV] *“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’” He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”*

A wonderful vision of a new world.

Someday the Christian church will be able to relax her guard, call the watchmen down from the walls and live in safety and peace but **not** yet, **not** yet.

All that is good in the world is a target for all that is evil to shoot at.

Good only manages to stay alive by the constant protection of the Almighty God.

Nations and individual humans are in the deepest trouble when they are **unaware** of the extent of the deception they are in.

Revelation 3:17-18 [NIV] *“You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so that you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so that you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so that you can see.”*

These Christians were unaware of the peril they were in.

They were blinded to their situation by worldly wealth, and personal pride.

These seven letters to the church may be expounded in sermons and articles in church publications, with the hearers and readers responding for a few moments.

James 1:22-24 [NIV] *“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.”*

There seems to be a bent to backsliding built into every human being, that is all but impossible to cure.

In our physical body every human has enough lethal bacteria in them to kill them within twenty-four hours except for one thing.

That is the amazing immune system that is powerfully attacking this lethal enemy day and night.

Every human being must also fight mental and spiritual enemies that are placed within our mind and spirit by Satan and his evil society.

This spiritual disease is the result of things that originally designed to be beneficial to humans, being perverted and now out of control in this Satan-driven society.

The Christian church lives in a very hostile society.

Within the church and all around her are enemies that could destroy her.

Satan intends to destroy the Christian church and these invisible enemies will succeed unless we are aware of them and resist their onslaught.

James 4:7 [NIV] *“Submit yourselves, then, to God. **Resist the devil**, and he will flee from you.”*

Very wise and “wake-up” words from James.

How do we resist this onslaught by Satan?

Revelation 12:9-11 [NIV] *“The great dragon was hurled down, that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. **For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.**”*

By proclaiming the redemptive power of Jesus Christ’s sacrifice and being a Holy Spirit empowered Christian.

This means being a witness for Jesus Christ by our personal Christian lifestyle.

The Greek word translated “testimony” is “*marturia*” which is from root word “*martus*” meaning a martyr, one willing to surrender their very physical life for a good cause.

Romans 12:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

A living sacrifice, so our martyrdom may just entail giving up our time and substance for Jesus Christ, our Master, to use to fulfil His will and purpose.

Any church or Christian will collapse from this sheer external pressure where there is not an internal power that is greater.

1 John 4:1-4 [NIV] *“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognise the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world. **You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.**”*

This One that is in every true Christian and Christian church is the Holy Spirit from God.

This is the spirit that is greater than Satan and all his demons who are in this society, creating all that is evil in the hearts and minds of humans.

For our physical body to overcome the lethal bacteria it must be kept in good health.

The same is true of our spiritual life as individuals and as church fellowships.

The health-giving power of the Holy Spirit is **not** optional but essential.

The Christian church is a living organism and there are many hindrances that can effect its spiritual growth.

The human body can fight its bacterial enemies while asleep, the church, as the spiritual body of Jesus Christ on earth **cannot**.

The Christian church must be constantly awake and determined **not** to give in to these attacks from without.

What can weaken the Christian church or the individual Christian in this resisting of evil?

1. Unbelief

The temptation is strong in any human being to reject what we cannot explain, or at least to withhold belief until we have investigated further.

This attitude of investigation is commendable in a scientist but totally wrong for a Christian.

Hebrews 11:6 [NIV] *“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”*

If God promises something in His Word, the Christian Bible, we believe it, otherwise our attitude is a defamation of God’s character.

Titus 1:1-2 [NIV] *“Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God’s elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness, a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time,”*

The true God can never lie. It is not in His character.

Our faith as a Christian rests totally on the man Jesus Christ, who declares that He is both God and Lord.

This claim must be received by total faith or rejected outright, it can never be proved by investigation.

This faith is confirmed in the believer by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, but only after it is there without other support than Jesus Christ Himself, and what He has done for all humanity.

John 3:16-18 [NIV] *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”*

Our faith is to be Jesus Christ alone.

2. Complacency

Amos 6:1 [NIV] *“Woe to you who are complacent in Zion, and to you who feel secure on Mount Samaria, you notable men of the foremost nation, to whom the people of Israel come!”*

The contented Christian is **not** in danger of attack by Satan, they are **already** being attacked.

Revelation 3:14-17 [NIV] *“To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation. **I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I am about to spit you out of my mouth.** You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.”*

Like the Laodicean church, those who are complacent are sick and do **not** know it.

2 Timothy 1:5-7 [NIV] *“I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. For this reason I remind you to **fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.** For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.”*

We need to ask the Holy Spirit to prompt us into action.

We need to declare war on spiritual contentment.

Philippians 3:12-14 [NIV] *“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: **Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.**”*

Always be pressing towards the goal that Jesus Christ has set before us.

Ecclesiastes 7:8 [NIV] *“**The end of a matter is better than its beginning, and patience is better than pride.**”*

Where our life ends, the quality of our spiritual life at the end of our physical life is what we will be judged on.

Hebrews 3:6 [King James] *“But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm **unto the end.**”*

Holding on to the end is emphasised.

Hebrews 3:14 [King James] *“For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast **unto the end;**”*

Hold on to what we believed when we first stepped out in faith into our new Christian life.

Hebrews 6:11-12 [NIV] *“We want each of you to show this same diligence **to the very end,** in order to make your hope sure. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.”*

Same diligence to the end of our physical life.

Revelation 2:26 [NIV] *“To him who overcomes and **does my will to the end,** I will give authority over the nations,”*

Our future rewarding job is dependent on our resisting the influence of Satan to the very end of our physical life.

3. Self-Righteousness

This temptation to feel morally pleased with ourselves will become all the greater as our lives conform more to that of Jesus Christ.

John 15:5 [NIV] *“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; **apart from me you can do nothing.**”*

The only sure defence against this temptation to be self-righteous is to remember Who is making the changes for the better in our lives.

It is Jesus Christ, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-26 [NIV] *“But the **fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.** Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.”*

These Godlike characteristics are only the “fruit” of the Holy Spirit working in us.

Isaiah 64:6 [NIV] *“All of us have become like one who is unclean, and **all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.**”*

All our efforts to be righteous are unacceptable to God the Father.

4. The Fear of Other Humans

Proverbs 29:25 [NIV] *“**Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.**”*

This fear can cause us to make wrong decisions.

2 Timothy 1:7 [NIV] *“For **God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.**”*

The Holy Spirit in us can give us the courage to face all that other people can throw at us.

The whole of the society is geared to destroy individual independent thinking and belief, seeking, by the use of fear to make us conform to all of those around us.

Romans 12:2 [NIV] *“**Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.**”*

We are commanded not to conform to this society’s way of doing things.

Our mind and spirit is to be remade to conform to the will of our Creator God.

Hebrews 2:14-15 [NIV] *“Since the children have flesh and blood, he [Jesus Christ our Saviour] too shared in their humanity so **that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.**”*

Satan as well as those humans he influences, try to use fear of death to get us to conform with the practices of his world of evil.

Our faith in the death and resurrection of our Saviour frees us from any fear of death.

If we as Christians surrender to fear, we have been conquered by Satan.

We have shown a lack of faith in the promises that our Saviour made personally, and in the writings of the apostles, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

There are other enemies that can be identified in the scriptures, the Christian Bible, our Handbook For Life.

Such as:-

Love of money and luxury

Secret sympathy with the lifestyle of this society

Self-confidence and pride

Unholy thoughts

Hebrews 12:2-3 [NIV] “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

Keep our eyes on Jesus Christ and yielding to His will, allow Him to finish the spiritual creation He started in us at the moment we first set our faith in Him.