

**CERTAIN OPPOSITION**

*"The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?" Jer 5:31*

No doubt as we begin to practice a daily church life and meet according to the Spirit's leading we will encounter much opposition. However, we should not be surprised by this, since the Devil has been opposing the church from its beginning. He is doing his utmost to keep the church from functioning as it should. His goal is to keep the members of Christ's body inactive. For when believers live according to the leading of the Holy Spirit, they express the person of Jesus Christ on the earth. By thus expressing Jesus Christ, they are defeating God's enemy, the Devil. They are tearing down his kingdom, capturing people out of his kingdom and transferring them by the Spirit's work into the Kingdom of God. This is something which the Devil cannot tolerate. He would like to see all the members of the body of Christ be passive, docile and doing nothing to bring the Kingdom of God to the earth.

Satan greatly opposes anyone being born anew. But once this happens, the next best thing he can do is to keep them from doing anything for God. If he can keep them deceived, weak and timid, he can keep them from furthering God's work. For these reasons, the Devil will strongly oppose any kind of teaching or practice which stimulates Christians to experience the church in a living daily way. He has worked very hard through the centuries to get the Church as a whole to the passive state she is in today. He is not about to give up easily. Therefore, when anyone begins to teach or practice a daily church life, he should expect opposition.

Satan's opposition will come from many places and in many different ways. He will use anyone he can to work for him. Those whose hearts are not right with God are prime candidates. The Devil will use them to repel and attack what God is doing. He is an expert at finding people to do his bidding and ways to get his work done. Satan does not want to see living church meetings led by and filled with the Holy Spirit. He also does not want to see the church becoming a living daily experience for Christians. His objective is to oppose and counter this kind of thing as much as he can. Surprisingly, some of his best instruments are religious people. Even Christians who really are born again but do not know God in an intimate, real way can be used mightily by the Devil to frustrate what God is doing.

One of the biggest stumbling blocks for many Christians concerning a free, enjoyable, Spirit-led worship service is tradition. Over the years, man has introduced much tradition into the church. Since the days of the early Fathers, an abundance of things have been added to the church. Many of these things have eventually become

traditions for Christians in their church experience. Understandably, believers who are following the leading of the Holy Spirit may not desire to participate in or be a part of such traditions. The reaction of those who hold these traditions and consider them to be sacred may be to bitterly oppose and attack those who do not cleave to them.

This same reaction was a problem in Jesus' day. Some of the religious people of that time, the Pharisees, had instituted many apparently good and appropriate traditions into the Jewish faith. One of the main reasons that the Pharisees opposed Jesus was that He did not keep their traditions. They were greatly offended by Him because He transgressed the commandments and rituals that they themselves or their forefathers had instituted. They also thought that if anyone did not keep these observances that they were against God and could not be from God.

This attitude and way of thinking is well expressed by Jesus in the Gospel of Mark chapter 7, verse 9, where we read: "And He said unto them, 'Full well ye reject the commandment of God that ye may keep your own tradition.'" and verse 13: "Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye." Unfortunately, this same attitude is still prevalent today.

Here we find that religious traditions may easily become the enemy of the living daily walk with God. In many cases they stand in direct opposition to what Jesus Christ wants to be doing through the Holy Spirit in our midst. These traditions limit God; and they do so by causing Christians, even real believers, to condemn and oppose what the Holy Spirit might be doing in a living way.

There are verses in the New Testament, it must be admitted, which teach us that we should hold fast to the traditions which were delivered to us by the first apostles. These verses do not apply to the many hundreds of traditions which have been added by men to the Church since that time. The Apostle Paul taught us many things about the Lord's supper, marriage, and various other things which are Spirit-instituted traditions. These we must follow (also by the Spirit) today. However, it is wrong to universally apply these verses to mean that we must keep every human tradition which has been instituted since that time. This interpretation simply cannot be supported. So we see that the traditions of men hinder the Holy Spirit's moving and also provide a basis for other Christians and religious people to resist, oppose and condemn things which are different from their experience.

Another great problem which causes people to oppose the reality of the church is that of ulterior motives. Unfortunately, since we are not yet completely purified, many Christians may have wrong motives for the things which they are doing. Such motives may lead men to do things which are not in God's purpose or will. The Apostle Paul said in Philippians 2:21: "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." This verse shows us that many of the Christians which Paul knew had some other motive or reason for doing what they were doing besides the pure and simple fact that they loved Jesus Christ. In the same way, we also should be careful that everything we do would be to please Him. Our first and foremost goal should be to be obedient to Him. Interests and desires of our own—in fact all other motivations—should take second place.

Let us now take a brief look at how some of these other motives work to destroy the Church of God. Unfortunately, the effects are all too easy to see. Some men have gotten themselves into a position in which it would be very difficult for them to practice the church life according to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Too many of the members in their congregation would be opposed to this sort of thing. Spirit-led

meetings would require a great adjustment which many are not willing to make. This puts many pastors, for example, in a very awkward position. They are faced with a dilemma. Either they must face losing their congregation, their incomes, their homes, and possibly everything for which they have been working, or continue doing things in the old way. Such a situation quickly leads to the question of motives. What are our motives? Are they to take care of ourselves and our families first and to serve Jesus Christ later; or shall we put Him first above everything and be willing to face the consequences of being faithful to what we have seen?

Money is one of the singularly most powerful influences in our world today. Our whole society revolves around money. Everyone must have a job to make money so they can support themselves. Our status and our influence in the community is constantly assessed and defined by the amount of money we make. From the time we are young, many of us are taught that money is a means of security. Unfortunately, few Christians have learned to trust God totally and to lean on Him as their only security.

If any church leaders find themselves in this kind of situation, it may be very difficult for them to alter the course on which they are going. Sadly, a common alternative to changing course is to oppose anything new or different. Anyone may have a vested interest in something and therefore feel it necessary to attack or condemn anything which might threaten his security. Meetings which are not subject to the traditions, concepts and rules of man may be such a threat. An open-to-the-Spirit, free-flowing church life may be a great challenge to many whose jobs and positions depend upon something else. In all likelihood this kind of teaching and practice may offend some of these people and cause them to react against it.

Another motive, which is an all-too-common pitfall, is that of trying to build up a following. Many leaders and church organizations today have as a primary goal increasing their membership and building up a following. This goal is not godly. Mere numbers do not impress Him. When Jesus walked the earth, His attention was never on how many people were following Him. Our goal should be to build up the church as a whole regardless of whether or not more people attend the meetings with which we are involved. Our goal should be Jesus Christ alone. Our motivations ought to be what is best for Him, for His kingdom and for His glory. Whether or not more people attend the meetings which we may attend should be of little consequence to us and what we are doing.

The concept of a Spirit-led daily church life, and Holy-Spirit directed meetings, may be a threat to those who are trying to build up something for themselves. Smaller home meetings and an unstructured daily church life may challenge the control which some exercise over the believers. Such an arrangement removes much authority from men and places it again with the Head, Jesus Christ, where it belongs.

If our work and our ministry is not based entirely upon Jesus Christ and conformed to His will, we may find ourselves opposing something which He is doing. May God have mercy on us that we should not be rejecting what He is doing. Let us seek Him diligently that He would purify our hearts and our motives so that we could serve Him properly.