



Satan's Plan for the Church

By David Ravenhill

I started thinking the other day about what I would do if I were the devil. (After reading this some of you may think I am!) The only opposition the devil has to fulfilling his great commission is the Church. If the Church can be rendered powerless then Satan's kingdom will flourish unhindered and unopposed. If I were the devil I would be carefully evaluating every possible way to accomplish this goal.

My first course of action would be to foster the belief that sin carries no consequences in the life of the believer. The devil knows that a sinning Church is a powerless Church. If he can convince Christians that they can sin with impunity, he knows their carnal desires will do the rest. And isn't this exactly what he told Eve in the Garden? His message that fateful day, "You shall not surely die," has remained his mantra ever since. Some denominations even go as far as having this as one of their major tenants of faith: If you have said the sinner's prayer, it doesn't matter how you live, you can never be 'removed from the garden.'

One biblical picture of the impotence of God's people when sin is in the camp is what happened when the Israelites attempted to destroy the city of Ai. They had just witnessed God tear down the impregnable walls of Jericho—how could this puny city stand in their way?

But there was something the leaders didn't know: there was sin in the camp. Although the Lord had forbidden the Jewish people from keeping any of the spoils of the city for themselves, a man named Achan had grabbed a few items and hidden them in his tent. When the Israelites were soundly defeated at Ai, Joshua fell on his face before the Lord, pleading to know what had gone wrong. "Israel has sinned therefore they cannot stand before their enemies," came the Lord's reply. It is just as true today as it was then: sin renders the Church powerless against the kingdom of darkness.

The second false concept I would introduce to God's people would be that you get all that God has for you at conversion. If the devil can convince Christians that there is no further work of grace, no need to press on to spiritual maturity, no need for consecration, no empowering for service, then they will forever be seeking to accomplish things in their own strength. Without the promised presence of the Holy Spirit, God's people will achieve little—if any—measurable results. Almost without exception every man or woman who ever accomplished anything of significance for God testified to some powerful encounter with the Holy Spirit.

Jude described such teachers as, "...the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit." (Jude 1:19) He went on to tell his readers to pray "in the Holy Spirit." The devil will constantly do his utmost to promote false teachers who are "devoid of the Spirit" and to oppose those who understand the power of "praying in the Holy Spirit." He is happy for there to be a great deal of religious activity—so long as none of it is done under the unction of the Holy Ghost. Yes, if I were the devil I wouldn't change my plans in the slightest. After all, why change what has worked so well for so long? The antidote to Satan's plan is obvious: we need to pursue holiness with a passion and seek daily to be filled by the Holy Spirit. The devil cannot stand against godly believers who are operating in the power of the Holy Ghost.

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