

# Why the Devil Is Interested in Your Church

## Why The Devil is Interested in Your Church

(Recognizing the Places of Spiritual Attack)

By Dave Butts

Several years ago I had the opportunity to write a book entitled [The Devil Goes To Church](#). It's been interesting to watch the responses of people who see the title for the first time. Most of them say, "The devil sure does go to church... especially mine." Why this overwhelming awareness that Satan is somehow interested in what happens in churches? Maybe it's because we're seeing his hand at work in the church. This excerpt helps us understand why Satan is interested in your church and four ways that he attacks local congregations.

There is a very real reason why the devil goes to church. The Biblical worldview is of a great cosmic battle between the forces of God and the forces of Satan. Christians are those who have changed sides in the battle. Paul writes about this changing of sides in the second chapter of Ephesians: *"...in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions –*

*it is by grace you have been saved"* (vv. 2-5).

The enemy of our God has become our enemy. We are not in a neutral position. When Christians gather as the church, we become a real threat to Satan. We are there to worship, to pray, to teach and to encourage one another to live and proclaim the Kingdom of God and as such, proclaim the enemy's defeat. It is apparent that he will do all he can to prevent that from happening...

The real danger for us is being unaware of the enemy's schemes. We approach every difficulty in church as though it is just a natural thing. When churches divide over whether or not to use hymns or contemporary choruses, it is not natural. When the flock turns on the shepherd, it is not natural. When the saints, called to live in love, spend their time criticizing and accusing one another, it is not natural. The devil has come to church!

...There is one obvious thing about Satan's attacks – he is consistent. He does basically the same thing over and over again in church after church, down through the ages. We might categorize them in these memorable ways: Doubt, Deceit, Discouragement, Division.

## **Doubt**

Sowing doubt has been one of the enemy's weapons from the very beginning. In Eden, the serpent stirred up doubt in Eve, causing her to sin. He caused her (and Adam) to doubt God's word, asking the insidious question, "Has God said...?" You can almost hear the oily voice continuing, "You don't really believe that do you?" The same voice, the very same voice, is asking the same question today, causing Christians to begin to doubt God and His Word.

Doubt was the weapon Satan used against Jesus in the wilderness. Every temptation was preceded by the word, "if." *"IF You are the Son of God,"* the enemy whispers,

attempting to instill doubt into Jesus. He still uses the same attack.

Doubt can come in many forms. Sometimes it is the frontal attack on the veracity of the Bible. There are many in church who simply do not believe that all of the Bible is truly God's inspired Word. But sometimes the most vicious attack comes on those who do believe in the Bible, but are then led into doubt as to the power of God's Word. "Will that really work?" people ask. Whole segments of Scripture are robbed of their power as Christians relegate them to some other day or time, and fail to appropriate them for themselves. Be careful when trying to explain away a clear meaning of Scripture. It may be that the enemy is raising doubts.

Doubt is also raised as to the nature of God. When tragedies come in life (and they do), even Christians find themselves doubting the love or mercy of God. "How could a loving God cause (or allow) such a thing to happen?" The whispering enemy is again at work to cause God's people to doubt the goodness or power of their God. We're sometimes told that to doubt is natural. Not for those who have tasted of the goodness, mercy and power of God! Faith is the natural response to God. Look at Job and the almost inconceivable tragedy that changed his life. Though facing great loss and with tremendous grief, still he words one of the great faith responses in Scripture, *"The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised"* (Job 1:21).

Doubt also comes to the individual believer regarding his/her position in Christ. The enemy continually works at trying to separate us from Christ. He doesn't have the power to actually do that, but he tries to instill doubt in us as to who we are in Christ. The best way to counter that is with the truth of God's Word. Christian author, Neil Anderson has written much on this topic and has prepared a wonderful list of scriptures that affirm who we are in Christ:

- John 1:12 – I am God’s child.
  - John 15:15 – I am Christ’s friend.
  - Rom. 5:1 – I have been justified.
  - 1 Cor. 6:17 – I am united with the Lord and one with Him in spirit.
  - 1 Cor. 6:20 – I have been bought with a price; I belong to God.
  - 1 Cor. 12:27 – I am a member of Christ’s Body.
  - Eph. 1:1 – I am a saint.
  - Eph. 1:5 – I have been adopted as God’s child.
  - Eph. 2:18 – I have direct access to God through the Holy Spirit.
  - Col. 1:14 – I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins.
  - Col. 2:10 – I am complete in Christ.

## Deceit

A second weapon that Satan uses against the Church is deceit. This should not surprise us since Jesus Himself described Satan as a liar. Satan delights in twisting the truth, confusing people and leading them into error. That’s rather obvious when you look at the condition of Christian doctrine, both within and without the Church. It may be as subtle as the lack of understanding concerning Christian grace or as obvious as those who deny the inspiration of the Bible.

The Apostle Paul speaks of difficult times for the Church in the last days, especially in regard to truth. We are warned of those who are *“always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose the truth, men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected”* (2 Timothy 3:7-8).

Like what you are reading? This article is a part of the text from the course “The Devil Goes to Church” at [PrayerU.com](https://PrayerU.com), the digital learning site of Harvest Prayer Ministries. [For more information on this course, click here.](#)

This passage is so clearly being lived out in the Church today, that we can easily see the enemy's handiwork. There is no shortage of Bible studies in our churches. But we debate the meaning rather than living out the intent of God's Word. We have fallen into the trap that James warned us about: *"Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says"* (James 1:22). Studying Scripture without doing it is one of Satan's great deceptions.

This deception concerning the Word of God leaves the Church powerless and unable to function as God has intended. George Otis, Jr. delivers a scathing indictment of this powerlessness as follows:

"If ever there was a moment for the Church to stand up and be counted, that moment is now. Unfortunately, American Christendom is in the midst of a low, debilitated spiritual state. At almost every turn, supernatural power and insight have given way to religious inertia. Fellowships are growing numerically, but members are not maturing in character. There are programs aplenty, but little fear of God. Most ominously, modern believers seem oblivious to their own unhealthy condition. Having succumbed to the Laodicean Syndrome (see Revelation 3:14-17), they view their compromised state as normal – even blessed.

"A troubling, if predictable, consequence of this spiritual self-deception is that the Church has found itself unable to speak into the current crisis with any clarity or consistency. Burdened political leaders seeking direction from Christian clergy and prayer networks report receiving advice that 'wanders all over the map.' Needing wise men with keen understanding, these national decision makers are finding instead blind guides and flesh-clouded counsel" (George Otis, Jr. "Fading Light," January 2003).

## Discouragement

One of the main passages of Scripture that we often use to hit people over the head with to get them to attend church is Hebrews 10:25: *"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching."* The focus of the passage however is not merely attending a meeting, but in the process, encouraging one another.

One of the very practical reasons for this scriptural command is to counter the enemy's strategy of discouraging the believers. Many faithful Christians who have withstood the more frontal attacks of Satan in the area of morality, truth and righteous living, have found themselves blind-sided by discouragement. A few words of criticism here and there, a "down" day, a little loss of fresh vision, a program that didn't go according to plan, and suddenly we find ourselves discouraged and wondering if we can go on.

Many great women and men of God have had severe bouts with discouragement and depression. Perhaps the clearest example is that of Elijah following his great victory over the prophets of Baal. In the wake of that victory, Queen Jezebel ordered his execution. In fear, Elijah ran and ended up in this situation in 1 Kings 19:4: *"He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. 'I have had enough, LORD,' he said. 'Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.'"* Now that is serious discouragement from a great man of God. It took the intervention of the Lord Himself to bring Elijah out of that depressed mood.

You may not have sat under a tree with a desire to die, but discouragement can hit us all. The great word of God to the Church in this case is that we are called to be an encouragement to one another. We are to build one another up in our faith. Our gatherings need to be times of great encouragement. The church that is a place of support and

edification is a place where the enemy's plans have been thwarted.

There is an old story about discouragement called, "The Devil's Tool Sale":

"It was advertised that the devil was putting his tools up for sale. On that date the tools were laid out for public inspection. They had prices on them, and there were a lot of treacherous instruments: hatred, envy, jealousy, deceit, pride, lying, and so on. Laid apart from the rest of the devil's tools was a harmless-looking tool, worn more than any of the others and priced very high.

"'What's the name of this tool?' asked one of the customers.

"'That,' the devil replied, 'is discouragement.'

"'Why have you priced it so high?'

"'Because discouragement is more useful to me than all the others. I can pry open and get inside a man's heart with that when I cannot get near him with any other tools. It's badly worn because I use it on almost everyone, since so few people know it belongs to me.'"

When we begin to understand that discouragement is of the enemy, we can begin to counter it using the weapons of our warfare. It is not natural for a Spirit-filled child of God to walk around discouraged. This is an attack of Satan to put us on the sidelines.

## **Division**

Francis Frangipane writes, "If there ever was a false doctrine that was so widespread, so accepted in the Body of Christ, yet so contrary to the heart and teachings of Christ, it is the tradition of division within the Church" (*Becoming the Answer to Christ's Prayer*, p. 2).

One of the most effective strategies of Satan has been to bring about division in the Body of Christ. It makes sense that the enemy would push for a splintered, divided Church, since Jesus desired exactly the opposite. The main focus of Jesus' great high priestly prayer of John 17 was that His followers would be united. A strong, united Church is a testimony to the world of the love of God. Satan is doing all he can to destroy that testimony.

One of the main weapons we have against this attack is awareness of the enemy's schemes. If we are unaware of the satanic nature of division, there is a greater tendency toward excusing it or just assuming that this is one of those things that happens occasionally in the church. When we see clearly though, that we as a church are under attack, then we will determine at all costs to guard against division. Members of a congregation are well-prepared to resist the enemy when, finding themselves in times of conflict, they begin to ask the question, "What is the enemy trying to do here?" Then, turning to the Lord, they ask the most important question, "Lord, how do we counter the attacks of the enemy against Your people?"

When a church finds itself facing issues that bring division, the prayer meeting is far more effective than the board meeting. Division always has a spiritual issue at its root and the enemy is always involved. It is heartfelt, heaven-sent prayer by the Body of Christ that will rout the devil and deal with the issues that are at hand.

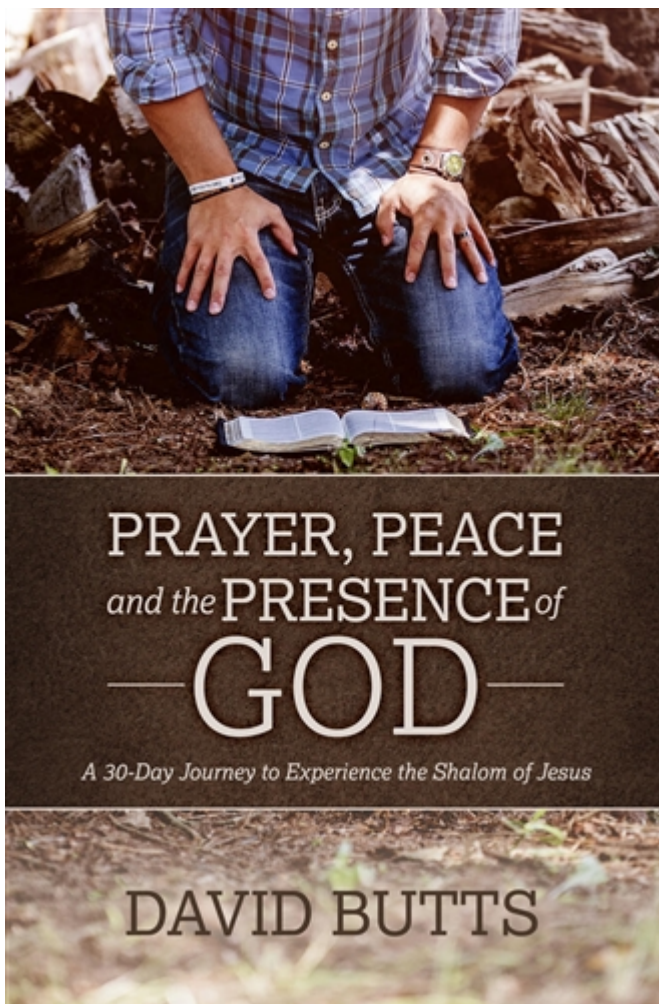
I'll never forget a church where I taught a prayer seminar in central Indiana. I'm so grateful I got there early that Sunday morning. As I walked into the church sanctuary, I was amazed to see about a dozen men walking around the room praying. They were laying hands on the pews and walking to the four corners of the room, praying for a new awareness of the Lord's presence, a fresh moving of His Spirit, and for protection from the attacks of the enemy. What a powerful way for a group of Christian leaders to go on the offensive against Satan and



to keep the devil from their local congregation.

How will you take your stand against the enemy?

Excerpted from [The Devil Goes to Church: Combating the Everyday Attacks of Satan](#) by David Butts, Harvest Prayer Ministries



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