

I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **Philippians 3:12-15** (from Tom Moore)
Not that I have already obtained *it*, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. [13] Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, [14] I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. [15] Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you;
- B. Our theme in this series of lessons, **Moving the Church Forward**, is stated in Phil. 3:13-14.
1. Paul believed in moving ahead - not falling back.
 2. He believed we should not be satisfied with where we are presently, but need to be moving forward.
 3. Last week the lesson was: **Challenges to Accept**.
 - a. Making a difference in the world.
 - b. Evangelizing our communities.
 - c. Developing leadership.
 - d. Abiding in the word of God.
- C. The Lord's church is described as a body, both in its life and its function (Rom. 12:4-5).
For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, [5] so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
1. Bodies are designed to live, act, and to work:
 2. It is natural for the body to function in such a way that life today promotes life tomorrow.
 3. The same is true for the church - life today promotes life tomorrow.
- D. The body also has enemies that can damage or even kill it: diseases and accidents.
- E. Likewise, the church has enemies that can keep it from moving into the future:
1. There are enemies that can damage/cripple the church.
 2. There are enemies that can kill the church.
- F. Therefore, we must be ready to fight these enemies if the church is going to move forward.
This morning; Moving the Church Forward (2): **Enemies to Defeat**.

II. THE ENEMY OF IGNORANCE.

- A. Ignorance comes in many forms (Isa. 45:20).
"Gather yourselves and come; Draw near together, you fugitives of the nations; They have no knowledge, Who carry about their wooden idol, And pray to a god who cannot save.
1. Here we have reference to the ignorance of the pagans who make his god out of a tree.
 2. Ignorant or superstitious worship was in Athens too (Ac. 17:22,23).
And Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. [23] "For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.
 3. Today many show their ignorance by worshipping of nature, crystals, idols, ancestors, etc.
- B. Jeremiah speaks of a stubborn ignorance; refusing to listen God (Jer. 5:21).
'Hear this, O foolish and senseless people, Who have eyes, but see not; Who have ears, but hear not. Many today simply refuse to see; they refuse to hear.
- C. They were specifically ignorant of the word of God (Hos. 4:1,6).
(Hos 4:1) Listen to the word of the LORD, O sons of Israel, For the LORD has a case against the inhabitants of the land, Because there is no faithfulness or kindness Or knowledge of God in the land.
(Hos 4:6) My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children. This was going to destroy them ... today as well.

D. Ignorance is a real problem; it causes:

1. Us to be lost (Mt. 13:15).
FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, AND WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES LEST THEY SHOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, AND HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I SHOULD HEAL THEM.’
2. Us not to do right, we can do no better than we know (Amos 3:10).
“But they do not know how to do what is right,” declares the LORD, “these who hoard up violence and devastation in their citadels.”
3. Us to follow the wrong path (Isa. 59:8).
They do not know the way of peace, And there is no justice in their tracks; They have made their paths crooked; Whoever treads on them does not know peace.
There are many paths - but only one path to heaven (Mt. 7:13,14; Jn. 14:6).
(Mt 7:13-14) “Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. [14] “For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it.
(Jn. 14:6) Jesus said^ to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.
4. Us to please ourselves - not God (Rom. 10:3).
For not knowing about God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.
5. God’s wrath to come upon us (Zech. 7:11-12).
“But they refused to pay attention, and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears from hearing. [12] “And they made their hearts *like* flint so that they could not hear the law and the words which the LORD of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets; therefore great wrath came from the LORD of hosts.

E. How do we defeat this enemy?

1. Learn to love God’s word (Psa. 119:97).
O how I love Thy law! It is my meditation all the day.
2. Give your attention to Scripture (1Tim. 4:13).
Until I come, give attention to the *public* reading of *Scripture*, to exhortation and teaching.
3. Be diligent to learn (2Tim. 2:15).
Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.

F. Friends and brethren, ignorance is an enemy of the church.

III. THE ENEMY OF UNBELIEF.

A. Many do realize this, but unbelief is a problem for both the saved and the unsaved:

1. It is a simple fact - people will die in their sins unless they believe in Jesus (Jn. 8:24).
“I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am *He*, you shall die in your sins.”
It is a matter of life and death.
2. It’s a terrible thing to be blind, but worse to be spiritually blind; plagued with unbelief (2Cor. 4:3,4).
And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, [4] in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.
Satan can blind people to the glory of the gospel, and thus, groping in unbelief.
3. Normally we think of the unsaved as being unbelievers, but the Hebrews writer is here addressing his brethren (Heb. 3:12).
Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God.

B. Unbelief can keep the church from moving forward. How might unbelief affect us?

1. If a person knows God’s word; and yet, does not believe it, what value will it be in their lives?
 - a. There will be no desire for obedience.
 - b. They will see no need for obedience.

- c. Those who do not believe that God cares how they live, are living in unbelief.
 - d. Those who do not believe that God has a plan to save, are living in unbelief.
 - e. Those who do not believe that it matters how we worship, are living in unbelief.
 - f. Those who do not believe that it matters how committed they are, are living in unbelief.
2. We should be like the man who cried out to Jesus (Mk. 9:24).
Immediately the boy's father cried out and began saying, "I do believe; help my unbelief."
- C. Friends and brethren, unbelief is an enemy of the church.

IV. THE ENEMY OF **APATHY**.

- A. A wife once asked her husband, "Do you think the world's problems are caused by ignorance or apathy?" The husband replied, "I don't know, and I don't care."
- B. Apathy is very similar to the attitude expressed by the church in Laodicea (Rev. 3:15,16).
'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. [16] 'So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.'
- C. They were lukewarm, they were lacking passion - they were unconcerned.
 How does apathy destroy us? It causes us to be:
 1. Lukewarm about the church - its purity, its doctrines, and its worship.
 2. Lukewarm about lost souls.
 3. Lukewarm about righteousness.
- D. The Bible very plainly condemns apathy and neglect:
 1. Neglecting their duties... would not help God's people... they were apathetic (Jud. 5:23).
'Curse Meroz,' said the angel of the LORD, 'Utterly curse its inhabitants; Because they did not come to the help of the LORD, To the help of the LORD against the warriors.'
 2. They were at ease, careless, apathetic (Isa. 32:9).
Rise up you women who are at ease, And hear my voice; Give ear to my word, You complacent daughters.
 3. Neglecting their duties (Jer. 48:10).
"Cursed be the one who does the LORD'S work negligently, And cursed be the one who restrains his sword from blood.
 4. At ease, apathetic (Amos 6:1).
Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, And to those who feel secure in the mountain of Samaria, The distinguished men of the foremost of nations, To whom the house of Israel comes.
 5. Hears and does not (Mt. 7:26).
"And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand.
 6. Faith without works cannot save (Jas. 2:14).
What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him?
 7. See Jas. 4:17.
Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin.
- E. Friends; apathy is an enemy of the church.

V. THE ENEMY OF **SIN**.

- A. This is the most obvious enemy, but sin happens to people:
 1. People who don't know (ignorance).
 2. People who don't believe (unbelief).
 3. And people who don't care (apathy).
- B. Ignorance, unbelief, and apathy all lead to sin.
- C. Notice what the Bible has to say about the enemy of sin:
 1. Sin hampers our Christian race (Heb. 12:1). A runner does not run a race hampered by weights.
Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

2. We need each other to help avoid having a heart hardened by sin (Heb. 3:12,13).
Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God. [13] But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called "Today," lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.
If it happens - sin will cause us to leave God.
3. We need each other to stay on the right track (Jas. 5:19,20).
My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth, and one turns him back, [20] let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins.

VI. CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

- A. For the church to move forward, we must recognize and defeat our enemies.
- B. Four great enemies of the church are: Ignorance ... Unbelief ... Apathy ... Sin.
- C. These are all enemies that we can do something about.
- D. Are you under attack today? FIGHT!!!
- E. Plan of salvation for non-Xians, erring Xians.