ENEMIES TO DEFEAT

Intro.

A. We need to recognize that we are involved in a great spiritual war (Ephesians 6:12 (NKJV) — 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.)

1. We must take our stand, take up the armor of God (Eph. 6:11, 13-14)
   a. Ephesians 6:11 (NKJV) — 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.
   b. Ephesians 6:13–14 (NKJV) — 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

2. and the weapons of our warfare (2 Corinthians 10:4–6 (NKJV) — 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, 6 and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

3. and contend earnestly (Jude 3 (NKJV) — 3 Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

4. fighting the good fight of faith (1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7).
   a. 1 Timothy 6:12 (NKJV) — 12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.
   b. 2 Timothy 4:7 (NKJV) — 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

B. The Battle is for Our Minds:

1. Satan’s goal is to pollute our minds? - 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 4:17-20
2. The world is evil - Jn 7:7; 1 Jn 5:19
3. We are to be holy – untainted by the world’s influence – 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; James 1:27; 4:4
4. We MUST feed our minds with the things of God, IF we are to remain holy and serve God – Phil 4:7-9; 1 Pet. 1:13-16; 2:1-12
   a. We determine Who & what we allow to occupy & control our mind -
      (1) Rom 8:5 “set their minds . . .”
      (2) Col. 3:2 - “set your mind on things above”
      (3) Phil. 3:19 - the end of “those who set their mind on earthly things”
      (4) 2 Cor. 10:5 - bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ
   b. Now it is important to note:

C. Before we can even enter into or continue this great on going battle we must recognize who our enemies are.

1. The church has enemies that can keep it from moving into the future.
   a. "Pay attention to your enemies, for they are the first to discover your mistakes" (Antisthenes).
2. Enemies that can damage or cripple it.
3. Enemies that can kill it.
4. Therefore, we must be ready to fight the enemies if we are to move forward.

I. THE ENEMY OF IGNORANCE

A. One of the first enemies against which we must fight is ignorance

1. Simple Ignorance
a. Many who simply do not know the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

b. **Isaiah 45:20** (NKJV) — 20 “Assemble yourselves and come; Draw near together, You who have escaped from the nations. They have no knowledge, Who carry the wood of their carved image, And pray to a god that cannot save.

(1) Religious ignorance of the pagan who makes his god from a tree.
(2) This should not be relegated to the past. Today many continue in the same kind of ignorance: worship nature, crystals, idols, ancestors, etc.

2. **Wilful Ignorance**
   a. There are many who are wilfully ignorant of the truth.
   (1) It's not that they haven't heard the truth to know it, they don't want the truth.
   (2) "The truth that makes men free is for the most part the truth which men prefer not to hear"

   (Herbert Agar, *Preaching Resources, Spring 1996, p. 71*).

b. How are they ignorant? **Jeremiah 5:21** (NKJV) — 21 ‘Hear this now, O foolish people, Without understanding, Who have eyes and see not, And who have ears and hear not:

   (1) They refuse to listen to God.
   (2) They won't see, hear or think.

3. **Negligent Ignorance**
   a. The most widespread ignorance comes from pure negligence.
   (1) Many carelessly neglect God, His Word and His salvation.
   (2) Neglect brings ignorance.

   (a) Neglect to hear God's Word. **Hosea 4:1–2** (NKJV) — 1 Hear the word of the LORD, You children of Israel, For the LORD brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land:

   “There is no truth or mercy Or knowledge of God in the land. 2 By swearing and lying, Killing and stealing and committing adultery, They break all restraint, With bloodshed upon bloodshed.

   (b) Neglect to teach God's Word. **Judges 2:10** (NKJV) — 10 When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel.

   (c) This continues to happen today.

B. **What ignorance can do:**
   1. Let me **tell you a true but tragic story**: A woman was once walking along a riverbank with her child. Suddenly the child slipped into the river. The mother screamed in terror. She couldn't swim, and besides, she was in the latter stages of pregnancy. Finally, somebody heard her screaming and rushed down to the riverbank. The utter tragedy was, when they stepped into those murky waters to retrieve that now dead child, they found that the water was only waist deep! That mother could have easily saved her child but didn't because of a lack of knowledge. (*Hell's Best Kept Secret*, by Ray Comfort, *Bellflower, CA: Ray Comfort, 1989*, pp. 160-161).

   2. **What will spiritual ignorance do?**
      a. Cause us to miss salvation.
      b. Cause us to miss obeying God's will.
      c. Cause us to "practice religion" instead of Biblical faith.
      d. Cause us to build monuments to ourselves instead of God.
      e. Cause us to miss God's purpose for us in the world.

C. **To fight the enemy of ignorance we must**
   1. **Study God's Word** to fight ignorance in ourselves. **2 Timothy 2:15** (NKJV) — 15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

   2. **Teach God's Word** to others.
a. Wherever there is the darkness of ignorance, we need to shine the light of truth.

b. Those who are in simple ignorance need to be taught. As Paul did to those ignorant worshipers in Athens. **Acts 17:23** (NKJV) — 23 for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you:

c. Those who are wilfully ignorant need to be corrected. **2 Timothy 2:24–25** (NKJV) — 24 And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, 25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth,

d. Those who are negligently ignorant need to be rebuked.
   (1) Neglect will bring God's wrath. **Heb. 2:3; Titus 1:13**
   (a) **Hebrews 2:3** (NKJV) — 3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him,
   (b) **Titus 1:13** (NKJV) — 13 This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith,

II. THE ENEMY OF UNBELIEF

A. Unbelief is a fierce enemy

1. For those unsaved outside the church: **John 8:24** (NKJV) — 24 Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”
   a. This is the simple fact people will die in their sins unless they believe in Jesus Christ.
   (1) It is a matter of life and death.
   b. **2 Corinthians 4:3–4** (NKJV) — 3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.
      (1) It is a terrible thing to be blind more terrible to be spiritually blind.
      (2) Satan can blind people to the glory of the gospel.

2. For even those who are brethren within the church:
   a. Unbelief is not an enemy from without, but must be fought even within the church.
   b. Paul warned, **Hebrews 3:12** (NKJV) — 12 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;

B. Unbelief can keep the church from moving forward.

1. Rocks. That's all that's left of the city of Chorazin. Just the rubble of a few buildings made of volcanic rock--yet this was once a thriving city on the Sea of Galilee.
   a. Not far from Chorazin is another pile of rocks--the former city of Capernaum. Same with Bethsaida. Once a bustling city where children played, men did business, and mothers ran households.

2. When Jesus walked the streets of those cities, He knew this would happen.
   a. In **Matthew 11:21–23** (NKJV) — 21 “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. 23 And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.
   b. In those cities, Jesus clearly showed Himself to be the Son of God--the One who had almighty power and could perform miracles. But the people refused to listen to His message. As a result,
Chorazin, Capernaum, and Bethsaida were cursed by God and reduced to heaps of rocks--monuments to unbelief.

3. The lesson for us today is clear. When Jesus speaks, we must take His words to heart. In fact, all of Scripture needs to be taken seriously.
   a. To disregard God's Word shows a heart of unbelief and will leave our lives in ruins. But to heed its life-giving instruction brings reward and blessing.
   b. How might unbelief affect us?
      (1) We might know, but not believe, God's word.
      (2) We might not believe that God cares how we live.
      (3) We might not believe that God has a plan to save in His word.
      (4) We might not believe it matters how we worship.
      (5) We might not believe it matters how committed we are.

C. How can we fight unbelief?
   1. In ourselves?
      a. We should be like the man who cried out to Jesus in Mark 9:24, "Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, 'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!'"
      b. We should seriously examine and apply God's Word in our lives. James 1:25 (NKJV) — 25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.
   2. In others? By building faith by teaching and defending the Word of God. Rom. 10:17; Phil. 1:17
      a. Romans 10:17 (NKJV) — 17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.
      b. Philippians 1:17 (NKJV) — 17 but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.

III. THE ENEMY OF APATHY
A. Apathy is a deadly enemy.
   1. Apathy was the attitude expressed by the church in Laodicea, for which Jesus soundly condemned them. Revelation 3:15–16 (NKJV) — 15 “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.
   2. Someone may say, "No this church was lukewarm."
      a. Well what is apathy except lacking passion, or being blah.
      b. In a word it is being lukewarm.
   3. Apathy produces skepticism and unbelief.
      a. How many have witnessed the apathy of those who profess to believe in a cause and concluded the cause is worthless?
      b. This was the conclusion of Harriet Beecher Stowe in Uncle Tom's Cabin makes. "My view of Christianity is such," he added, "that I think no man can consistently profess it without throwing the whole weight of his being against this monstrous system of injustice that lies at the foundation of all our society; and, if need be, sacrificing himself in the battle. That is, I mean that I could not be a Christian otherwise, though I have certainly had intercourse with a great many enlightened and Christian people who did no such thing; and I confess that the apathy of religious people on this subject, their want of perception of wrongs that filled me with horror, have engendered in me more skepticism than any other thing" (Harriet Beecher Stowe, Uncle Tom's Cabin).
B. How apathy can destroy us.
   1. Causes us to be lukewarm about the church.
   2. Causes us to be lukewarm about reaching the lost.
   3. Causes us to be lukewarm about righteousness.
4. Causes us to be lukewarm about practicing the fruit of the Spirit.

C. How can we fight apathy?
1. The Lord instructs us, Revelation 3:15–16 (NKJV) — 15 “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.
2. Do you have that burnin' flame to fight apathy?

IV. THE ENEMY OF SIN
A. This may be the most obvious enemy, but sin happens to people who don't know, don't believe, and/or don't care.
1. Ignorance, unbelief, and apathy all lead to sin.
2. If the church practices sin, how can we remain the church?
B. What sin does to us?
1. It hardens our hearts. Hebrews 3:12–13 (NKJV) — 12 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; 13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.
   a. One of the reasons we need each other is that we can help each other avoid having our hearts hardened by sin.
   b. If that happens, sin can cause us to leave God.
2. It hinders our race, our fight. Hebrews 12:1 (NKJV) — 1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,
   a. A runner does not run a race hampered by weights.
   b. Neither can we run the race of life hampered and weighted down by sin.
3. It harms our soul. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:20 (NKJV) — 20 The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.
4. The danger of sin?
   a. In a View From The Zoo, Gary Richmond, a former zoo keeper, had this to say: “Raccoons go through a glandular change at about 24 months. After that they often attack their owners. Since a 30-pound raccoon can be equal to a 100-pound dog in a scrap, I felt compelled to mention the change coming to a pet raccoon owned by a young friend of mine, Julie. She listened politely as I explained the coming danger. I'll never forget her answer. "It will be different for me.' And she smiled as she added, 'Bandit wouldn't hurt me. He just wouldn't.' 
   (1) "Three months later Julie underwent plastic surgery for facial lacerations sustained when her adult raccoon attacked her for no apparent reason. Bandit was released into the wild."
   b. Sin, too, often comes dressed in an adorable guise, and as we play with it, how easy it is to say, "It will be different for me." The results are predictable. (Bob Campbell).
C. The way to fight sin?
1. The error of sin can kill the soul. We need each other to help stay on the right track.
2. Instill God's Word within our heart. Psalm 119:11 (NKJV) — 11 Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.
3. Convert those in sin. James 5:19–20 (NKJV) — 19 Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, 20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

V. In Conclusion:
A. For the church to move forward, we must recognize and defeat our enemies. Long time ago, Pogo, the comic strip character, said, "We have seen the enemy, and he is us." Other people, the government, economics, religious prejudice, and a host of others may work against the church, but the most dangerous enemy of all lies within ourselves.

B. The four enemies are: ignorance, unbelief, apathy and sin. All of these are enemies that we can do something about.

C. Are you under attack today?
   1. Fight! Do not lose the battle. Enlist help.