

WHAT CAN KILL A CHURCH

Revelation 3:1 To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.

There are at least two ways a church may die...

- a. It may cease to exist
- b. It may die inwardly, even while it still lives outwardly

I. WORLDLINESS

A. WORLDLINESS INCLUDES IMMORALITY AND MATERIALISM...

1. Immorality is the lust of the flesh
2. Materialism involves the lust of the eyes

1 John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For everything in the world-- the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does-- comes not from the Father but from the world. ¹⁷ The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

B. SATAN USES WORLDLINESS TO DESTROY CHURCHES...

1. E.g., the church at Thyatira was threatened by the influence of Jezebel - Re 2:20-23

Revelation 2:20 Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols.

2. Materialism has drawn many Christians away from their service to the Lord
-- Churches are hindered when their members are rendered fruitless by worldliness - cf. Lk 8:14
3. Worldliness can lead to dogmatism.

Romans 12:1-2 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship. ² Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Romans 12:3-5 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. ⁴ Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

II. INDIFFERENCE

A. A SUBTLE, YET EFFECTIVE WEAPON USED BY SATAN...

1. It jeopardized the standing of the church at Ephesus, who had left their "first love" - Re 2:4
2. It characterized the church at Laodicea, making it repulsive to Christ - Re 3:15-17

Revelation 3:15-17 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! ¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm-- neither hot nor cold-- I am about to spit you out of my mouth. ¹⁷ You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

-- We do not have to oppose the church to kill it, just be indifferent!

B. SYMPTOMS OF INDIFFERENCE...

1. Irregular attendance of services
2. Lack of participation in the services (worship, Bible classes)
3. Consistently arriving late to services
4. No personal and private devotions (Bible study and prayers)

C. FERVENT SERVICE IS THE ONLY ANTIDOTE TO INDIFFERENCE...

1. **Galatians 6:9** Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

2. **Hebrews 6:10-12** God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. ¹¹We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. ¹²We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.

CONCLUSION

1. While there might be more ways to kill a church, these four are certainly effective:
 - a. Persecution
 - b. False teaching
 - c. Worldliness
 - d. Indifference

2. What about this congregation? Is Satan making any progress in killing us?
 - a. We might be free from physical persecution, and be known as a "sound" church
 - b. But is worldliness and indifference taking its toll?