

The Gospel Unashamed

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."

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The Thief Comes to Destroy



One Sunday morning, as I was driving to the congregation where I was scheduled to preach, I passed an old church building. The building had obviously been abandoned some time back. What caught my attention that day was that some workers were carrying debris out of the building and throwing it into a dumpster. It was obvious that they were doing some demolition work inside.

It struck me as strange that they would be doing this on a Sunday morning. After all, shouldn't they be worshipping? It just seemed so wrong that men would be tearing things down in a church building on a Sunday morning of all times. On my way home later, they were still hard at work destroying what was inside.

This got me to thinking. I wonder how many people go to church on Sunday morning to destroy it. They are not there to worship, encourage and edify others, learn and grow; they are there to destroy. They may get there early and stay late, but they are not there with good intentions.

As I considered this, I was reminded of what Jesus said about the thief.

"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." John 10:10 (NKJV)

Thieves take the very thing that is meant to bring abundant life to us as Christians and turn it into an opportunity to steal our joy, kill our enthusiasm, and destroy the Lord's Church.

Paul warned us about destroying the temple of the Lord (the Church).

"If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which

temple you are." I Corinthians 3:17 (NKJV)

The Greek word that is translated "defiles" in the **NKJV** has the idea of destroying or tearing down as some versions render it here.

Later in this letter to the Corinthian Church, Paul told them that they came together for the worse, not the better because of their divisions.

"17 Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. 18 For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it." I Corinthians 11:17-18 (NKJV)

Our attitudes, motives, and behaviors matter when we come to the assembly. If we come to divide, defile, destroy, or tear down the Lord's Church, the Lord will destroy you. It is noteworthy that just a few verses after this rebuke, Paul instructs us to examine ourselves when we partake of the Lord's Supper.

“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.” I Corinthians 11:28 (NKJV)

Paul further says that if we would judge ourselves, we will not be judged.

“For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.” I Corinthians 11:31 (NKJV)

Before we even leave our homes to go to the assembly, we ought to examine our attitudes. Are we going there to worship, encourage and edify, learn and grow, or to tear down and destroy? If it is the latter, perhaps we ought to stay home and not come together for the worse rather than the better. Our own salvation and the salvation of others just might be at stake. Do not act like a thief who destroys the sheep when you are supposed to be a sheep yourself. Do not come to church to demolish it; come there to build it up.