

## HOW TO KILL A CHURCH

By Dr. Hal Webb, Evangelist.

*"Let us consider one another to provoke into love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. Heb, 10:24-26.*

As a church, the Lord Jesus made it clear in Matt. 16:18. His overall institution of the church would never die. However it is clear it will suffer persecution, as in many countries today. All the powers of hell cannot destroy the church as an organism from outside. Individual churches are sadly killed from the inside by their own members. The continued existence of any local church is something all the members must work at. I cringe to say it again, but local churches can be killed by member ignorance, and carelessness of those who belong to it. Over 67 years of my evangelistic travels I have seen it happen, and I desire to warn all church members. Exactly how can you kill your own church. **(1) By Staying Away From It:** Think back over the text of this sermon and remember we are told not to forsake assembling together to worship. Yet how easy it seems for many church members to get involved in other things. When members start skipping church, it, like the flu catches up with others. You belong in SS and of course most church folks try to make it for Sunday morning service. Except for those who sleep in and argue they need time for something. The test begins on Sunday night when you have a great opportunity to show your love for the Lord and your obedience to His commands. It is a bad, destructive habit, to skip Sunday night for other activities. A pretty

sad Christian mows the lawn or whatever instead of being in church. If attending prayer meeting was a requirement for leaving in the Rapture, half of most congregations would miss out. Prayer meeting is the power house of the church, and greatly affects all the other services. You ought to say, my absence from any service in my church is a vote to close it. There are some who refuse to practice loyalty that may not be of us. *"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."* I John 2:19. Your excuses won't hold water and don't fool God *"All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirits."* Prov. 16:2. Your absentee excuses better be honest before God for He will judge you for them. Isn't it time for you to prove you really do believe the slogan, "Put Christ First?" This preacher urges you to get with it! **(2). By Starving It:** *"And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."* Acts 2:47b. The church lives and grows by conversions and the addition of converts to its number. Good preaching and praying plus the faithful bringing of lost souls, nourishes the church. If you don't labor to bring the lost you starve off those it is prepared to reach. Souls being saved are like a blood transfusion to any church. A church can be killed by starving it in the spiritual realm. Sometimes the message of the church is changed to heresy in practices and doctrine. Many false churches and religions today used to stand for the truth. Their clergy sought the wrong fellowship and their preaching became weak and untrue. You can further starve your church by not backing it with much prayer and faithful support. Your church is the grandest, most worthwhile business in the world, and it must have money to operate. At least a tenth of each members' income needs to be placed in the offering plate Mal. 3:8-10. The pastor needs to be well paid

and church bills must be paid. Cutting back church programs because of unfaithful giving is serious failure and will cause shrinkage in any church. **(3). Strife In It:** *"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as men?"* I Cor. 3: 1&3. When two people are in disagreement, and both are utterly selfish, it will cause a strife which will grow until it consumes the whole church. Strife is a mark of spiritual immaturity and is promoted by self righteousness, in that one looks down upon others, while exalting self in his own mind. One of the most tragic examples is when a member gets offended by the preaching. We need to remember, the pastor is commanded to *"Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."* II Tim. 4:2. Remember the pastor not only must declare the truth, but also to rebuke those who are living wayward lives. Further, rebellion against a pastor is usually an evidence of rebellion against God. Beware you are not a person that causes strife, but one who gently serves with others with genuine humility. **(4). By Stubbornness:** *"And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry."* I Sam. 15: 22&23a. It is no virtue to be so set in one's ways that you hinder a change for the better. Sanctification which in the process of changing people, often brings good growth and change in an active church. I often think of some folks showing a visitor all the great things that had come about in their church. Nearby an old member said, "And I've been agin every one of them." The sin of the Sardis church was that it stubbornly

refused to repent of sin, Rev. 3:3, and consequently it slowly died on the vine, all the while refusing to admit its cold and indifferent state. Our flesh does not like to be rebuked and some say it is your own business whether you repent or not. Not true! Remember every one of us is an example to others, and when church members become a bad example, the church is always injured. No church member can afford to indulge any sin, because sin in church members is what kills the church. It has solemn consequences. If an individual or individuals conduct themselves in such a way they destroy the church, they better get ready to face the soon judgment of God. *"If any man defile, (Greek- destroy) the temple of God, (we are the indwelt temple) him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."* I Cor. 3:17. Many carnal church members, in their zeal to get there own way, justify their own sins, soothe their own pride and hurt feelings, and do not seem to care if they destroy a faithful lighthouse. **(5). Selfishness:** *"But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"* I John 3:17. We have greater means to get the Gospel out than any generation of the past. Via radio, TV, the printed page, and computers, all provide a multiple means of reaching out to our world in sin. The question is, why are we not doing it? For \$30 dollars a month a national overseas pastor can be supported. Many spend more than that on our pets, hobbies and recreations. God help us in these last days to share the good news of the Gospel, and not selfishly spend so much on ourselves. Others sacrificed that we might be saved, so we need to do the same. Are we like mules? **They can't pull while they are kicking, and they can't kick while they are pulling.** I am praying that God will help us to turn stubborn wills to honest correction, and work together to expand our church lighthouse.

