EXPOSING THE ACCUSER OF THE BRETHREN

by Francis Frangipane

The Attack on the Brethren by the Brethren

More churches have been destroyed by the Accuser of the Brethren and its fault-finding than by either immorality or misuse of church funds. So prevalent is this influence that, among some, fault-finding has been elevated to the status of a "ministry!" The Lord has promised, however, that in His house accusing one another will be replaced with prayer, and fault-finding replaced with a love that covers a multitude of sins.

Satan Wants to Stop Your Growth

Our goal is to see the Living Church, and families within the church, delivered from the stronghold of fault-finding, and to have our hearts turned to prayer. Satan has sent forth an army of fault-finding demons to hinder and even destroy the church. Their purpose is to entice the Body of Messiah away from the perfections of Yeshua onto the imperfections of one another.

The fault-finder spirit's assignment is to assault relationships on all levels. It attacks families, churches and inter-church associations, seeking to bring irreparable schisms into our unity. Masquerading as discernment, this spirit will slip into our opinions of other people, leaving us critical and judgmental. Consequently, we all need to evaluate our attitude toward others. If our thoughts are other than "faith working through love," we need to be aware that we may be under spiritual attack.

The people who have been taken by this deceitful spirit become "crusaders." They are irreconcilable enemies of their former assemblies and displaced family members. In most cases, the things they deem wrong or lacking are the very areas in which the Lord seeks to position them for intercession. What should be an opportunity for spiritual growth and meeting a need, becomes an area of stumbling and withdrawal. Their criticisms are a smokescreen for a prayerless heart and an unwillingness to serve.

Discovering imperfections in anyone is by no means a sign of spirituality. We could easily find fault with the church or family members before we were Christians. What we do with the imperfections that we see is the measure of spiritual maturity. When Yeshua saw the condition of mankind, He "...made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, ...He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. (Philippians 2:7-8) He died to take away sin, He did not judge them.

No One Is Exempt

Messiah Himself could not satisfy the "standards" of this fault-finding spirit when it spoke through the Pharisees. No matter what Yeshua did, the Pharisees found fault with Him. If you have not personally consulted with and listened to the individual of whom you are critical, there is no way you can be sure that you are not in the role of the accuser of the brethren? Even the "... Law does not judge any man, before it hears him, (John 7:51)."

If the enemy can discredit the minister, it has discredited his message. The timing of attacks on ministers of the gospel is usually just prior or just after a breakthrough of spiritual growth. The unchallenged assault of this fault-finding demon always stops the forward progress of the church.

When this spirit infiltrates an individual's mind, its accusations come with such venom and intimidation that even those who should "know better" are bewildered and then seduced by its influence. Everyone involved focuses on "issues," and forgets that Yeshua is praying for His body to become one. Devastation wracks the targeted church. Discouragement will seek to destroy the pastor and his family or other servants of God in the Church.

The fault-finder spirit is devastating. It is depressing to try to track down the accusing spirit as it whispers its gossip through the local church. Trusted friends seem distant and established relationships are shaken. The growth and work of the church is stopped by strife.
This enemy is not limited to attacks on local churches. Its attacks are city wide and nationwide. Publishers make fortunes selling defaming books. Biblical ways of correction never seem to be followed. Biblical ways of correction lead to healing and not destruction.

The fault-finder usually clothes its criticisms in a religious covering. This spirit pretends to protect the sheep from a "gnat-sized" error in doctrine, while forcing it to swallow the "camel-sized" error of loveless correction. When it attempts to correct violations of scripture, it employs the very methods which seriously violate scripture! Where is the "spirit of Gentleness" (Galatians 6:1), or the humility in "looking to yourselves, lest you too be tempted?" Where is the love motive to "restore such a one?"

In most cases the person supposedly in "error" has never even been contacted before his alleged mistakes enter the rumor mill of the church. Only after slanderous damage is done is he made aware of his alleged faults. Brethren, the spirit behind such accusations must be discerned, for its motive is not to restore and heal, but to destroy!

The Pure Example

The church does need correction, but the ministry of reproof must be patterned after Messiah and not the accuser of the brethren. When Yeshua corrected the churches in Asia (Revelation 2-3), He placed His rebuke between praise and promises. He reassured the churches that the Voice about to expose their sin was the very Voice which inspired their virtue. After encouraging them, He then brought correction. After correcting them, His last words were not condemnation, but promises.

This is the way He corrects each of us. No matter how bad our sin may be, His voice always contains "grace and truth." Remember, if the word of rebuke or correction does not offer grace for restoration, it is not the voice of your Shepherd. If you are one of Messiah's sheep, you will flee from such a voice.

The Enemy's Weapons

To find a charge against the church or a repentant believer, the enemy must draw his accusation from hell. If we have repented of our sins, no record of them exists in Heaven. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." (Romans 8:33) Yeshua is not condemning us but is at the Father's right hand interceding on our behalf.

Let us expose the weapons of the fault-finder. The first weapon of the fault-finder is our actual sins. Our failure to repent when the Holy Spirit desires to correct us opens the door for the accuser to condemn us. The voice of the enemy never offers hope nor extends grace for repentance. It acts as though it were the voice of God, and we are guilty of the "unpardonable sin." The way to defeat the enemy in this arena is to disarm him by sincerely repenting of the sin, and affirming that the atonement of Messiah is the sum of all of our righteousness.

Satan seeks more than just accusing us as individuals. Satan wants us to criticize and condemn others. Satan wants us to react in the flesh against offenses, instead of praying for those who offend us. Our human responses are then easily manipulated by the fault-finder spirit. We will cast down the accuser of the brethren when we learn to pray for one another instead of preying on one another. We must learn to forgive in the same way that Messiah has forgiven us. When someone has repented of his sins, we must exercise the same attitude of "divine forgetfulness" that exists in heaven. We defeat the fault-finder when we respond like Yeshua: like a lamb, Messiah died for sinners; as a priest, He intercedes. A godly spirit praises, edifies, and intercedes. An ungodly spirit finds faults, criticizes, and condemns.

The second weapon the fault-finding demon uses against us is our past mistakes and poor decisions. We all have made mistakes. Hopefully, we have learned from them and have developed humility because of them. The fault-finding demon takes our past mistakes and parades them before our memory, criticizing our efforts to do G-d's will, thus keeping us in bondage to the past.

When the enemy pits us against one another, it first provokes us to jealousy or fear. The security of our place in life seems threatened by another's success. Perhaps to justify our personal failures or flaws, we magnify the past shortcomings of others. The more our jealousy grows, the more this demon exploits our thoughts until nothing about the individual or his church seems right.
In the final stage we actually wage a campaign against him. No defence he offers will satisfy us. We are convinced he is deceived and dangerous; and we think it is up to us to warn others. The truth is that the mind controlled by the fault-finder is the one who is deceived and dangerous. His own unrepentant thoughts toward jealousy and fleshly criticism have supplied hell with a "lumber yard" of material to erect walls between the members of the body of Messiah.

Often we find leaders who have fallen from the intensity of their first love, who end up persecuting others who are moving in the Holy Spirit. As disciples of Messiah we will be persecuted. However, there is no biblical authorisation for Christians to persecute others. It is incredible that those who are persecuting others often think that they are offering service to God. We can fight this enemy by creating an atmosphere of grace. We will do what we can to cause all things to work together for good. If someone stumbles, without encouraging hypocrisy, we must be quick to cover him with prayer. We must never forget that "we are members of one another." (Ephesians 4:25) We are family. Love will find a redemptive way to cover a multitude of sins.

Where The Vultures Are Gathered

There are times when God will prune us back to increase our fruitfulness. This is to prepare us for new power in ministry. At such times, new levels of surrender and crucifixion of the flesh may be required. It is often a time of humiliation and testing. We may feel empty and ineffective as the Lord is expanding our dependency on Him.

During such times the fault-finding spirit targets us. The fault-finder spirit will never be found among the Lord's pruning tools. It is strictly a tool of the devil. What God has designed as a time of growth in the clarity and power of prophetic vision can bring us down, and cut us off from the very people who should have prayed us through to the victory. In this attack the fault-finder is most destructive. It is here that the fault-finder can kill mature ministers which would arm their churches for war.

The fault-finders and gossips are already planted in the church. It is always possible that we could be such a one!

When our leaders are being made more deeply dependent on God, have we been tempted to criticise the apparent lack of anointing? Would we abandon our friends, leaders, and family when our faith may be the very encouragement they need to fully yield to the cross?

Those who are sympathetic to the accuser of the brethren fulfill Matthew 24:28, "For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the vultures be gathered together." The backbiting of these vulture-like individuals actually feeds their lower nature, for they seek what is dead in a church; they are attracted to what is dying.

Eventually these fault-finders depart, instinctively looking to take issue with some other church. "These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage. ...the ones who cause divisions....mockers ...who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit." Jude 16-19 They leave behind their former brethren severely wounded and in strife, and a greatly disheartened pastor. Once again the fault-finder spirit will manifest itself through them, strategically positioned to destroy another church.

Today, God is seeking to raise up His servants with increased power and authority. In the pruning stage of their growth, will we water their dryness with prayer or will we be vultures drawn to devour their dying flesh?

How To Correct the Error

When the accuser comes, it brings distorted facts and condemnation. Those who are trapped by this spirit never research the virtues in the organization or person they are attacking. To conquer this enemy we must earnestly seek God’s heart and His calling for those who we would reprove, with the same zeal that the fault-finder seeks to uncover sin.

True correction, proceeds with reverence, not revenge.
Are not those whom we seek to correct Messiah’s servants? Are they not His possession? Is it not possible that the works of which we are jealous, and thus critical, might be the very works of Messiah? We must ask ourselves: Why has God chosen us to bring His rebuke? Are we walking the way Messiah would walk?

These are important questions. To be anointed with Messiah’s authority to rebuke, we must be committed to people with Messiah’s love. But if we are angry, bitter, or jealous toward another, we cannot even pray correctly for that person, much less reprove him. Yeshua was declared worthy to bring forth judgment because of his nature: He was the Lamb slain for men’s sin. If we are not determined to die for men, we have no right to judge them.

Those who seek to justify leaving a church must not do so simply through finding fault. We should openly communicate with the ministerial team. Our attitude should be one of prayer and love. If people bring with them a root of bitterness against their former assembly, that root will spring up in your church and many will be defiled. No matter how much you need new members, never build your congregation with individuals who are unreconciled to their former fellowship.

In the house of the Lord, criticism must be replaced with prayer, and fault-finding eliminated with a covering of love. Where there is error, we must go with a motive to restore. Where there are wrong doctrines, let us maintain a gentle spirit correcting those in opposition.

Ways to defeat the Accuser of the Brethren

When you discern a fault, know that God is calling you to pray. Matthew 18 shows must go directly to your brother FIRST!

Know that the manifest power of the Holy Spirit depends on the body being in one accord.

Understand that a mark of Holiness is the recognition of similar wickedness in your own heart.

You CANNOT minister unless you FIRST be RECONCILED, then you can have the anointing to minister.

Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.

Let people know that you stop gossip with direct open rebuke.

IF the principles of Matthew 18 have been followed, then - Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. (1 Timothy 5:19-20)

We must learn to pray for one another instead of preying on one another. We must hang together or they will hang us separately.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become [as] sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have [the gift of] prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing.

We all know IN PART. We all prophecy IN PART. Here is a surprise for all the great teachers. You don’t know it all. God did it this way so that we would have common sense to know we need each other.