



MINISTRIES

A Ministry of the Athens Universal Life Church
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<https://aulc.us>

Welcome. Today's sermon is titled "A Deadly Enemy Within the Church".

Today's scripture lesson comes from Deuteronomy chapter 1 verses 5 to 8.

Starting at verse 5.

Across the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses began to explain this law, saying:

Departure from Horeb

"The Lord our God spoke to us at Horeb: 'You have stayed at this mountain long enough.

Resume your journey and go to the hill country of the Amorites and their neighbors in the Arabah, the hill country, the Judean foothills, the Negev and the sea coast—to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon

as far as the Euphrates River.

See, I have set the land before you. Enter and take possession of the land the Lord swore to give to your fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their future descendants.'

May the Lord Add His blessing to the reading of His Word.

Beloved, as we gather in this house today, I want to draw your attention to a peculiar passage in the book of Deuteronomy. It is a passage about movement, about transition, and about a command from God to stop circling the mountain and go possess the land.

We read in Deuteronomy chapter 1 verse 6, "The Lord our God spoke to us in Horeb, saying: 'You have dwelt long enough at this mountain.'"

Think about the context. Israel had become accustomed to walking around in circles. For years, God had led them around the wilderness. They had become content to stay within the safety of the mountains,

pitching their tents in comfortable spots. They had even forgotten why they were out there in the first place! When an enemy would come, they would fight, but seldom did they encounter any enemies. So, they just camped here, then there, doing nothing more, for years.

And then, when the time was right, God broke into their routine way of life and said, "You have been here long enough, it's time for you to move on."

Now, I ask you today: What is the deadly enemy within our church?

Nobody in the church claims that the first five books of the Bible are just stories.

Nobody in the church says that the creation account is fiction.

Nobody in the church denies that Jesus walked on water and did the things He did.

Nobody in the church denies that one day Jesus is coming back.

We, in the church, do as we please without interference from the government. We are not facing the persecution that our brothers and sisters face in other lands. We have our Bibles, our freedom, and our buildings.

So, what is the deadly enemy? If it isn't heresy, and it isn't persecution, what is it? The enemy is not always a doctrine we deny; sometimes, it is a habit we embrace. The enemy is routine.

The first way this enemy manifests is that routine becomes the way of life in the church. What will happen next Sunday can be easily predicted. We can look at the bulletin, the order of service, and the clock, and we know exactly how the morning will unfold.

Nothing unusual is expected from God. Things will be pretty much as they were last Sunday, and the Sunday before that, and the Sunday before that one. The only thing that really changes in the Sunday bulletin is the hymn numbers.

We go through the motions. The major process of learning is by doing it over and over again until it can be done without even thinking. Schools teach children to do things over and over until they "learn" them.

Our militaries do the same thing in basic training; troops do something over and over again until they can do it blindfolded.

Our worship services often fall into this same trap. How much thought is given to the words that are being sung of a familiar hymn? What about familiar scripture being read?

How much attention is paid to the sermon being preached?

We are caught up in singing, praying, reading, and participating in worship services without any feelings, any awe, any wonder, or any expectations. We act as if God cannot get into our services because we have it all

fixed up for Him and all He needs to do is just bless what we do. When we expect nothing, we receive nothing.

The next step for the enemy within the church is for everyone to get into a "rut."

You know how country roads become during winter and rainy seasons, don't you? They become impassable except for the ruts that have been formed in the road by some vehicle that went that way first,

making deep impressions in the muddy road. Everybody then followed in those deep ruts so they could move on down the road. Everybody who went down that road had to go the same way, for the ruts were the way to go.

Churches also get into a "rut." Somewhere way back, something was done for the first time. Ever since that first time, it has always been done exactly the same way. Nobody ever asks why, how, where,

or when... we just blindly do it the same way.

The result of a church being in a "rut" is that it is controlled by what was done long before, and nobody ever thought of changing the way things have been done.

Expecting nothing new runs the church and spiritual inactivity is dominant. This causes the church to visualize nothing and to not have a desire for any change or improvement.

Some churches try to get out of their "rut" by having contests, programs, gimmicks, and worldly tricks. They try to bring themselves out of enslavement to the routine through entertainment.

However, all that is really done is to bring some people in to join in the repeating of dead services without feeling, without meaning, without awe, and without spiritual happenings.

You cannot program the Holy Spirit, and you cannot trick people into true worship.

Thirdly, everybody knows just what will happen, and that is a deadly enemy in the church. We blame everything for nothing happening—from the devil to the culture to the weather.

But the greatest enemy of the church is not from the outside, but from within: an attitude of accepting things as they are and always have been. What was determines what will be.

With this attitude, a church will not and cannot be doing God's will and will not grow.

We must remember what the church actually is. The church is not the building...sorry, but it isn't. It is an assembly of people. Let me say that again: The church is not the building. It is an assembly of people.

America is made up of people. Society is made up of people. Thus, the church is made up of real people, and they make up what kind of church it is...no worse, no better, no wiser, no holier, no more alert,

and no more worshipful.

For the church to change, its people must change. The building cannot be revived; the people must be.

The program cannot be anointed; the people must be. The deadly enemy lives in the mirror.

When we look in the mirror, we see the only one who can break the routine.

So, what do we do? We must identify the three sins that usually find the church that is not growing for the Lord.

The sin of self-righteousness. Thinking we are fine the way we are.

The sin of judgment. Looking at the world with pride rather than compassion.

The sin of complacency. Being comfortable with spiritual stagnation.

God is telling us today what He told Israel... "You have dwelt long enough at this mountain."

It is time to move. It is time to stop circling the same mountain of routine. It is time to stop following the ruts of the past and start following the Spirit into the future.

Do not let the sun set on another Sunday without expecting God to move. Do not let the comfort of the familiar rob you of the power of the Almighty.

And so, I invite you to the altar. If you feel the sting of the Holy Spirit, if you realize that you have been just going through the motions, or if you are trapped in a rut of religion without a relationship, come.

Maybe you are here today and you have never truly accepted Christ as your Savior. You have been in church, you know the routine, but you don't know the Redeemer.

The altar is open. The church is not the cemetery, and what has been should not dictate what will be.

God says, "Move on." Will you come and pray, "Lord, revive my heart"?

Please bow with me as we pray...

Father God,

We come to You now, realizing that we have often been content with circling the same mountain.
Forgive us for our routine worship that has just become a habit.
Forgive us for getting into ruts of tradition that have stifled Your Spirit.
Lord, we confess the sin of complacency. We confess that we have not expected great things from You.
We have made our services predictable and have left no room for Your miracles.
Break our hearts. Stir our souls. Remind us that the church is not these walls, but it is us...Your people.
Help us to move forward, to leave the safety of the familiar, and to possess the land You have promised.
We ask for a fresh outpouring of Your Holy Spirit. Do not let us leave this place the same way we came. Revive us, O Lord.
In the precious name of Jesus, we pray,
Amen.

Go out this week and be a blessing and be blessed. For the more you are a blessing, the more you will be blessed.

Thank you for watching and listening and we will see you all next week.

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