

COLONY COLLAPSE DISORDER

“When the Enemy Comes in Like a Flood”

“And after a time he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcase of the lion: and, behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase of the lion. And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat: but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcase of the lion.” Judges 14:8-9

“My son, eat thou honey, because it is good; and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste: So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul: when thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off.” Proverbs 24:13-14

Recently, among the species of the Honey Bee, there has come a scourge called “Colony Collapse Disorder” (or CCD). CCD is a phenomenon in which worker bees from a beehive or Western honey bee colony abruptly disappear. While such disappearances have occurred throughout the history of apiculture, the term “Colony Collapse Disorder” was first applied to a drastic rise in the number of disappearances of Western honey bee colonies in North America in late 2006.

CCD is swift in its effect. Over the course of a week, the majority of the bees in an affected colony will flee the hive and disappear, going off to die elsewhere. The disease showed a completely new set of symptoms, “which does not seem to match anything in the records,” said an entomologist. Some of the symptoms of CCD are:

- Infected bees pass spores—sick bees often have diarrhea and defecate in the hive, greatly increasing the chances that other bees will be exposed.
- Other bees come in contact with the spores and ingest them.
- Queens suffer damage to reproductive organs, and bee populations can drop dramatically.

We, as preachers and especially as pastors, have experienced the attritions that happen from time to time among congregants. The backsliding of those who, for whatever reason, slip away from their spiritual moorings and are once again ensnared in the world from which they once came. We have witnessed disgruntles that charge away to “other” places—sometimes families and a select few others making their exit. No doubt many of those individuals are often inspired by spiritual forces that seek to steal, kill and destroy and hopefully they depart without doing damage en masse. Yet while there are those “few that depart” scenarios in every church membership on occasion we also realize that there also can be that devastating condition that seems sadly similar to the honey bees’ “Colony Collapse Disorder” where some spiritual virus of hell attaches itself to a church and works havoc among an entire congregation. No longer is it just the “a few here and a few there” but amazingly it seems that the entire forest is aflame and not just a tree or two. It appears that a spiritual CCD is taking place!

I hope my introduction is clear enough to bring the focus of attention on those situations that sometimes begin to affect an entire congregation—those kinds of spirits that often don’t have a name but cause unrest and dissatisfaction (w/o basis or reason) and seems to come from all the 4 winds

whirling in every direction. Instead of the two or three that become infected suddenly there is a congregation wide epidemic that has no single problem but is a hodgepodge of many things—everything from outright rebellion to depression. A CCD problem!

We all seem to realize that there are spirits of uncleanness such as fornication, adultery, etc., and there are spirits that incite tale-bearing and such like that infect individuals that have improper leanings in their lives..... but I think we often are not as aware of some spirits that can incite unrest and dissatisfaction and stir up impatience and confusion among many other such anomalies that can plague a church. The foul unclean spirits are sometimes much easier to spot... but I think satan knows that if he can create an atmosphere that can affect group-thinking he has accomplished more than he can do with individual sniping and if he can find a way to make it a lingering atmosphere it therefore continues to inflict damage over time. I think Paul makes this clear in Gal. 3:1, “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?”

Paul’s epistles to the Corinthians are a true eye opener regarding how many varied issues can exist in one local congregation. Paul has to deal with contentions and divisions over preacher popularity, immaturity, fornication, spiritual pride, pending law suits against one another, serious marriage issues, idols and their power, causing others to be offended by their liberties, offerings, communion fallacies, men and women’s hair questions, abuse of spiritual gifts and a host of other sundry issues and problems. It seems as though a deluge of satan’s emissaries had descended into the fold! No wonder pastor’s feel swamped during these unrelenting assaults! And, I think, therein lies the rub. If through wearing down tactics, the enemy can prolong its effect upon the leadership of a church the more success is possible if the effect seems overwhelming to a pastor. It’s the old “keep kinking the wire till it breaks” strategy. The “fatigue” syndrome is a choice weapon of hell.

Among the beekeepers CCD causes consternation due to unanswered questions that arise from its devastation, mainly the most prominent question asked by the beekeepers is “What is the cause of this and how do I stop it?” This question goes unanswered because the true cause of the disorder is yet unknown even though there are many theories. It is very frustrating to see the condition happening and yet be perplexed, as Paul said, as to how to remedy the malady. Pastors are often faced with encounters that they are at a loss to understand “why” the event is transpiring. While we may often have the culprit’s finger prints and can clearly identify the perpetrator in some cases yet there are those other times when identification is not readily available and for all practical purposes we must deal with a spirit without a name. The torment of “Why?” is a very real thing.

We, of course, understand that the answer to all things is always God. The Holy Ghost and its ability to affect the whole person is the key to survival during those times of upheaval. A bee smoker causes bees to do 2 things—stay calm and eat. They say that the secret of smoking bees has been known for thousands of years, the scientific explanation for how it works is more recent.

Under normal circumstances if a beehive is threatened, guard bees will release a volatile pheromone substance known as an alarm odor. This alerts the middle-aged bees in the hive— the ones with the most venom—to defend the hive by attacking the intruder. When smoke is blown into the hive first,

however, the guard bees' receptors are dulled, and they fail to sound the pheromoniuous alarm. Conveniently the smoke has a secondary effect in that it causes the other bees to instinctively gorge themselves on honey—this gorging has a tendency to pacify the bees.

The Holy Ghost, like the smoke, has an affect that keeps things in order in people's lives. They learn to trust—and they continue feeding on the Word. Lord, how we need that!

All said and done, the complexity surrounding people with all their associated emotions and mentalities and their interactions with others having the same degree of complexities makes for an entity having a plethora of tendrils that constantly are in motion and pity the pastor who thinks he can “handle it” through his own abilities and intellect. “Seeing the big picture,” in reality, is something no mortal can testify as truly ever having done—the only One who can both see the fall of the sparrow and know the exact count of the hairs on a man’s head is God, however, it was this same God that made us overseers and whom He delegates He also equips as needed. While we sometimes struggle to maintain spiritual equilibrium within a church and when we seem to have many more questions than answers, we may rest assured that our labor is not in vain. “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” 1Cor. 15:57-58

We still claim the eternal promise found in the fifty-ninth chapter of Isaiah: “Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity. They hatch cockatrice' eggs, and weave the spider's web: he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper. Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands. Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths. The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace. Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness. We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noonday as in the night; we are in desolate places as dead men. We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us. For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them; In transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment. And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him. For he put on righteousness

as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke. According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies; to the islands he will repay recompence. So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun.

When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him.

And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.”

Amen.

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