

THREE DEADLY PITFALLS FOR PREACHERS

E. L. Bynum

Of course this is not to say that there are many other pitfalls for preachers, for indeed there are many others that have trapped many men of God with fatal results. But in my experience over the years these are the most common ones. If you are called to preach, you can be sure that you are a marked man for destruction. The devil is out to get you and he will use your weakest points to destroy you and make you ineffective for God. All preachers must recognize that they are no-match for a roaring lion. *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a **roaring lion**, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”* (1 Peter 5:8)

Satan is even more dangerous when he appears as an angel of light. *“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an **angel of light**. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.”* (2 Corinthians 11:13-15) As the context shows, we can see that false apostles and deceitful workers are transformed into angels of light. This brings us to the first perilous pitfall and that is modernism.

THE DEADLY PITFALL OF MODERNISM

The God called man must ground himself in the fundamentals of the Christian faith. Of all the books that he will study, the foundational one is the Word of God the Holy Bible. Higher Criticism has crept into most of the so-called Christian schools, and they will poison your mind against the Word of God.

Christian Book Publishers are cranking out a multitude of books which are filled with false doctrines in various amounts. Some of their books have only a little leaven of false doctrine, while others are overloaded with false doctrine. I think the little leaven is more dangerous than the other. Just remember it only takes a little leaven to leaven the whole lump. *“Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. **A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.**”* (Galatians 5:7-9)

When we see ourselves adopting a little leaven in our doctrine we need to make sure that we purge out or cleanse our minds of it. *“**Purge out therefore the old leaven**, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.”* (1 Corinthians 5:7)

It is a proven fact that many Bible believing young men head out to colleges and seminaries to be trained for the ministry, only to be led to believe that their errors in their Bible. Their faith is destroyed by theories that are false. They are fed a dose of German rationalism based on the doubts of men who have abandoned the faith once delivered to the saints. After three to seven years under such teaching, they end their student days believing less of the Bible that

when they enrolled in school.

They are educated above their intelligence, and loaded with information that will do them no good in the ministry. I am for education and training for the ministry as long as it does not include any form of modernism or new evangelicalism.

Whenever a preacher doubts that parts of the first eleven chapters of Genesis are not literal, he is well on his way into modernism. To doubt the literal Genesis account of creation is a deadly pitfall. To doubt the literal Genesis account of the great universal flood in Noah's day is a sign that one is already on the side of unbelief.

To abandon or correct the King James Bible, is a sign that one has already joined the camp of liberalism. Modernism, liberalism and New Evangelism are deadly traps for preachers that will guarantee they will be ruined for God's use. My advice to preachers, after 53 years in the ministry, is to stick with the Bible. Use the best of other books as tools, but do not follow their false doctrines. Any book that disagrees with any doctrine of the Bible, should be abandoned. Get your sermons from the Bible. Study the Bible, believe the Bible, and you will never go wrong.

THE DEADLY PITFALL OF MONEY

If your main idea of success is making money, you need to get out of the ministry. If financial success is your object, you are in the wrong profession. You will generally have some members that will make far more money than you ever will. Some of those same successful men will sit on your finance committee, and will set your salary, and may well say that you don't need a raise even though you are struggling financially.

Some preach for money, but I have always been willing to preach without money if necessary. Preaching is a calling from God, and should never be bought for money. Remember the great apostle Paul had to work with his own hands, while doing the greatest mission work the world has ever seen. A god-called preacher should be able to live of the gospel, but that is not always going to prove out in the ministry. *"Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."* (1 Corinthians 9:14) *"Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things."* (Galatians 6:6) *"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine."* (1 Timothy 5:17)

Every true preacher of the Word, is worthy of being taken care of by the flock that he ministers to, but that will not always be taken care of, but if God has called you to preach, then preach regardless of the pay. A man that will preach only when he is paid is a hireling.

In fact there is no record of an apostle or any preacher in the Bible ever making any financial gain through the ministry. If a little hardship hardens you the wrong way, just maybe you do not belong in the ministry.

Learn to budget your money, and do not live above your finances. Do not live on borrowed money, or run up bills on credit cards, which will make large interest charges, and which you will have to pay back. The interest you pay is gone forever and you will never be able to spend it again. Remember you don't have to live in the largest house, or drive the latest model car. Pastors' will be ruined by financial failings.

Do not talk about your financial problems, and never hint that you need a salary increase. Do not borrow money from the members of your Church. I can truthfully say that I have never borrowed a dime from a Church member, even though I desperately needed money and there were members that would gladly have lent it to me. The Lord always provided for us, and took care of us, even though there were some lean years.

Do not get to the point where you are tempted to be dishonest with the churches money. Some churches trust their pastor with church money, and it is sometimes tempting to go over the line and be dishonest. Remember God is watching you even if the church is not. It will catch up with you in the long run and may even ruin your ministry. Just remember that church money is God's money, and he will hold you accountable.

I have had members and nonmember hand me one hundred dollar bills and say, use this where it is needed. I have always taken that money and handed it to the Church treasurer, even though I could have really used it myself.

THE DEADLY PITFALL OF MAIDENS

I here refer to young women, mature women, and indeed all women. In my opinion this is the most dangerous pitfall that faces a God-called preacher. As we have recently seen, improper relationship with women has entrapped two four-star generals in the U.S. Armed Services. However it is even more shocking to read, "**Adultery Claims Another Prominent Pastor.**" And we further read that this was a pastor of a large Independent Baptist Church which makes the story worse. All too often we hear such stories, and find out that it is a pastor that preaches some elements of the truth. It is even a shame to hear of false preachers having an affair, but it is even worse when a preacher that preaches the truth to fall.

If preachers would only obey the Bible, these things would never happen, and the cause of truth would not be shamed and hindered. These kinds of things would never happen if men of God would heed the Scripture and treat "*The elder women as mothers; **the younger as sisters, with all purity.***" (1 Timothy 5:2) "*Abstain from all appearance of evil.*" (1 Thessalonians 5:22) "*Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*" (2 Timothy 2:22)

The Bible makes it clear that the qualifications for the ministry would preclude any relations with any other woman other than his wife. "**A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach.**" (1 Timothy 3:2)

It is clearly stated that a preacher “must be blameless” and “of good behaviour.” The word blameless means, “not apprehended, that cannot be laid hold of that cannot be reprehended, not open to censure, irreproachable.” “Good behaviour” means “well arranged, seemly, modest.”

There are many Scriptures that would apply such as, “*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*” (Exodus 20:14) The man of God is “*to keep himself unspotted from the world.*” (James 1:27)

It is easy to fall into a trap of being careless in such matters. Counseling is one of the dangerous things that can lead to a great fall. Be careful about counseling women, and make sure there is always another person present, and it would be preferable to have one’s own wife present. There is great danger of getting into a dangerous place. Going out to eat with the Secretary or any other woman can be a great danger.

We had a pastor here in Lubbock that took his secretary to conferences and fellowship meetings, which entailed them going out of town together. Of course this led them into sin and resulted with him having to leave the church he pastored and the church had to merge with another church.

The preacher is to be a one woman man. He must be careful and not be hugging women other than his wife. He is to pour out his affection and love to his wife. He should keep the romance going in his own marriage, and keep his eyes and hands off of other women. “*But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*” (Matthew 5:28) It is so easy in our society to allow sin in through the eye gate, especially even when even Christian women dresses immodestly.

“*Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth.*” (Proverbs 5:18) Remember your wedding vows and keep them with a holy zeal. When a preacher falls into immorality, it gives the devil an open door to bring shame upon the name of Christ, and gives people an excuse to criticize Christianity, the ministry, the church, and the very gospel of Christ.