

Program 51 Teaser

Ever see that pitiful sight of an animal, bird, fish, whatever—caught in a trap. Then along comes the “trapper”—and that is the end of the “trapped”. It’s like that in the spiritual world, only more deadly. After all, our bodies of flesh and blood last only years. Our soul lasts forever. That’s why I’m taking a second telecast—Part 2—on our subject of “How To Avoid Satan’s Traps.” The lesson is for the person who decides to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. But it is especially important for pastors, missionaries, evangelists, teachers and others who are examples to those who look up to them. So here we go—Part 2 of “How To Avoid Satan’s Traps”—on More Than Talk.

HOW TO AVOID SATAN'S TRAPS (PART 2)

Page 1 Carelessness Can Kill

Men and women at war are always alert for traps of the enemy. Carelessness on the part of any soldier can mean not only his death—but cost the lives of those in his unit. In spiritual warfare, it's far worse. When a Christian leader falls into the hands, of the enemy through rebellion and sin, many immature Christians who view that leader as their example may also get discouraged and surrender their faith. It has happened countless times.

That's why God spells love with not four but nine letters-O-B-E-D-I-E-N-C-E-obedience.

With a wide-awake Satan, there is no time to grow careless, proud or spiritually sleepy. This is Part 2 in "How To Avoid Satan's Traps". Part 1 covered the testing that's taking place to separate the real from the phony—those determined to sweat it out in faithfulness to Christ and those willing to sell out to the pull and attractiveness of sin. We warned of the pride trap that comes with the seducing spirit of "show biz" success and how easy it is for a leader—pastor, teacher, missionary, Christian seminary professor, any Christian leader—getting so busy doing "God's work" that they lose sight of "God will". Daily devotions get neglected, even abandoned. Prayer time is shortened. Faithful ministry to family—wife and kids—is no longer a top priority after love for God. A full schedule causes many to run on empty when it comes to intimacy with the Lord Jesus. First love is lost. Seeds of destruction are planted. And the devil waits for that moment when those seeds sprout into a full-grown plant of compromise and sin. So how can we avoid Satan's traps? We will continue explaining the answer to that question on page 2. You can review part 1 of this subject by going to our website and viewing #49 in our list of videos. Back in a moment.

HOW TO AVOID SATAN'S TRAPS (PART 2)

Page 2 The Safety Of A Watchful Mate

#5—The Specific Areas Of Accountability

First, there is nothing more important than one's devotional life with the Lord. Isn't it strange how we start out so in love with Jesus Christ that we can't get enough of Him. At least, that's what happened to me. Day and night—night and day—I couldn't get enough of the Word, of prayer, and of just loving the Lord, sometimes with all my voice as well as with all my heart.

But then what happens? Responsibilities come. And if we're honest, familiarity with the Lord begins to breed carelessness. We leave our "first love" (Revelation 2:4) and begin to reduce our quiet time with the Lord. Some even eliminate a daily quiet time, figuring that they will "catch up later with time with the Lord" when a better opportunity arises. It never does, and there is no catch-up tomorrow for my failing to walk intimately with the Lord today.

The Holy Spirit

So our first rung of accountability is to the Holy Spirit Himself. We're not to grieve Him by failing to listen to Him (Ephesians 4:30). A Christian leader is to find and eat God's Word daily (Jeremiah 15:16) and continue to rightly divide the Word of truth (II Timothy 2:15). Forty years into the ministry we are to still grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus (II Peter 3: 18). We're to run from the temptation to get so busy *working* for God that we fail to *worship* Him—so busy speaking *for* Him that we no longer speak as much *to* Him—so busy ministering to *others* that we no longer allow Him sufficient time to minister to *us* (or us to Him in praise and worship).

The Family

Second, there is the accountability that must come in family life. Do I as a minister spend quality time with my wife? Is she truly my best friend and confidant? Do I probe my childrens' hearts and minds to ask them how they view my life and ministry? No one can give straighter counsel (even though it may hurt) than young people when they know they won't be penalized for telling the truth.

Do I welcome correction from my mate—or put her down when she tries to tell me my faults? No one knows a man like those with whom he lives, and that's why,

though my daughter has called me her "hero," hers has never been blind hero worship. She knows her dad's faults and sins and can lay them on the line in short order.

HOW TO AVOID SATAN'S TRAPS (PART 2)

Page 3 When Money Becomes The Motivator

Opposite Sex

The third area of accountability is in one's relationship with the opposite sex. We in Christian leadership often quote I Thessalonians 5:22, "Abstain from every form of evil"—but then we don't. No one can sense a trap that a mate is about to walk into like the other marriage partner. How many times has my wife Norma brought me up short with "Honey, watch it." or "Honey, your compassion is being misunderstood."

Or "You shouldn't be counseling with that person—better to turn her over to me or another woman." And if a leader is single, he may be even more urgently in need of a close buddy who will keep a wary and watchful eye open in being "a friend who sticks closer than a brother.." (Proverbs 18:24)

Lifestyle

The fourth area of accountability is the material lifestyle of a Christian leader. I'm convinced there's nothing wrong with wealth for those in the secular world who work hard, earn their money the honest way and are able to purchase bigger and better things (though the Christian steward had better make mighty sure that he's living to give, and not to grab, so that he can lay up in store for himself a good foundation against the time to come (I Timothy 6:19). However, when Christian leaders live in mansions and accept or require enormous salaries, such is hard to justify scripturally—no matter how hard the prosperity teachers manipulate isolated verses.

While it's wrong for people to expect ministers and missionaries to live like they're in a perpetual poorhouse, the other extreme is far more deadly— imperial trappings that have one resort to pleading for funds from widows living in humble circumstances while the Christian leader is garrisoned in luxury. What does God think of such lifestyles that keep up with the rich and famous of the world while claiming that "our treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue?" It takes much time spent in long walks with the Lord to continue to see how God views the material—" ... beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." (Luke 12: 15).

Perhaps the Christian leader would be wise in praying for only material things that are sufficient; enough so that he does not have to beg nor steal but not too much where he would one day deny the Lord. Proverbs 30:8,9 says" ... Give me neither poverty nor riches—Feed me with the food allotted to me; Lest I be full and deny You, And say, “Who is the LORD?” Or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God."

HOW TO AVOID SATAN'S TRAPS (PART 2)

Page 4 The Co-Worker Trap

Organizational Structure

A fifth area of accountability lies in the realm of organizational structure. Christian leaders who have their official boards comprised of loved ones and family members have already planted the seeds of destruction. It's easy to rationalize this by saying, "But my loved ones and I have paid the price for the vision and we understand it better than any." However, loved ones are easily controlled, and that far outweighs any good that might come from their being on the board.

This is why organizations demanding financial accountability insist on the majority of board members being non-family. And no board member, no matter how flattered he is to be serving with that organization, should ever allow himself to be a mere figurehead or "yes man." God forbid that he should be the opposite—a thorn in the side of the Christian leader or organization, always disagreeing and feeling he or she has God's "gift of rebuke." There's no such gift. But there is the gift of a board member who takes such a personal interest in all matters, whether financial, practical, or spiritual, that he or she can offer wise counsel to the Christian leader (Proverbs 11: 14).

We've discussed the shaking going on, the seducing spirit of show biz success, the seduction of pride, the salvation of accountability and the specific areas of accountability. There are two more I wish to bring out.

Principle #6 -- The Subtle "Intimate Co-Worker" Trap

Many a good man has fallen into the trap of working too closely with an assistant of the opposite gender. Soon they're *really* working too closely—sometimes at off hours in meeting urgent deadlines or traveling together on the road to meetings and functions. Even if this unwise and unscriptural partnership avoids sin, it opens itself to scandalous gossip.

Let's face it, with so much of today's emphasis placed on sex, and suggestive words and bodies advertised everywhere, lust hangs in the air like smog over Los Angeles. But the word and power of the Lord can keep any man or woman from falling into Satan's trap. "Flee fornication" was not just written to Timothy (I Timothy 5:22) but for all time. "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (I Thessalonians 5:22) was written not merely to those with moral hang-ups, but to

those as pure as the driven snow who would be unwise in developing a close relationship not conducive to the scriptural admonition to, "Keep yourself pure." (I Timothy 5:22)

HOW TO AVOID SATAN'S TRAPS (PART 2)

Page 5 Avoiding The Fatal Fall

#7—The Safety Of A Watchful Mate

I've already covered this subject in sufficient detail, but let me emphasize just a couple more points. Every Christian leader would be wise to develop a working partnership with his or her mate by attending speaking engagements and going on long journeys together. One thing is for sure, the man who would only take his female assistant on such forays, without his mate, would be the equivalent of a fool (and I very seldom use that term). One of God's greatest gifts is the mate who gives her husband timely warnings—and knows he's wise enough to take them.

No Christian leader need fall into sin, no matter the pressures. God has given His clear plan of biblical accountability as His means to escape every satanic trap. This does not mean a Christian leader is perfect. We walk with a God Who is perfect, but our faults are many. Therefore, we Christian leaders will have our falls, but they need not be fatal falls. They should be only that which is part of normal faults and failures with the added scriptural truth of Psalm 37:23, 24, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, and He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the LORD upholds him with His hand..."

May this lesson be an encouragement in your life of Christian leadership. May God bring escape from every present and future trap set by Satan. And may every Christian take a more personal responsibility for those who are their Christian leaders—to pray for, care for, counsel and even correct us when our lives or messages do not line up with the Word of God. God's amazing grace on His part—your and my humble watchfulness on our part—and the corrections and rebukes by God and others, when we as leaders stray from the path—these three proven means can and will help us to avoid Satan's deadly traps. That way we will be good examples in His Name—rather than more bad examples of those who ended in shame.