

The Road to Perdition

Sex should no longer be 'the last straw' that causes us to question one's ministry.

Sexual immorality is usually not the first stop on a leader's road to perdition. Satan's smarter than that, and he knows we are too. That's why he tempts us with more innocuous delicacies, such as greed, power and false doctrine. A real-life example of this principle is vividly—and sadly—described by our columnist R.T. Kendall in this issue (see page 24).

Our demise begins rather like the familiar frog in the kettle. We allow ourselves to believe our own marketing: "Yes, I am a prophet—that's why people are criticizing me." "It's OK if I misuse this text ... as long as I get the point across." "I do deserve this kingly treatment. After all, I have a very special gift."

Before long, we're sitting in a boiling hot tub, surrounded only by people who will affirm our delusions of greatness. We've successfully distanced ourselves from all opposition, and they've moved to a safe distance to observe our demise. We still draw crowds of people who view our heresy, pride and extravagance as idiosyncrasies of the anointing.

The problem is not that the church is too tolerant of sexual immorality. Instead, it is that we tolerate the more insidious behaviors that are the precursors to moral failure. It is only when the final straw of sexual immorality is laid on the back of the proverbial camel that we throw up our hands in exasperation and act as though we didn't see it coming.

This was particularly poignant in the case of PTL founder, Jim Bakker. As he notes in his book *I Was Wrong*, many of his friends, spiritual peers and a nationwide audience loyally reinforced his adherence to a gospel of greed ... that is until

it was revealed that he had engaged in a one-night fling.

Friends, as spiritual leaders, sex should no longer be “the final straw” that causes us to question the validity of one’s ministry. We must be willing to challenge and confront those who persist in ethical and doctrinal ambiguity before Satan lays his last trap.

Paul’s instructions to his protégé Timothy reveal the inseparable link between false doctrine, greed and sexual immorality—none of which are to be tolerated among Christian leaders. He warns Timothy to watch both his life and doctrine closely, “for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you” (1 Tim. 4:16, NKJV).

The flip side of Paul’s warning reveals the destruction in the church wreaked by those who fail at this. I, for one, have seen enough of this destruction and heard too many stories from sincere believers strewn in the wake of those who fall. We must have the grace and conviction to intervene—before the fall. *

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