

# **R.T. Kendall: When You Seek to Please Man, The Unthinkable Can Happen**

There are two questions I will ask after I get to heaven (but not in this order): first, why was I a New York Yankees fan? In Ashland, Kentucky, all the people I knew were for the Cincinnati Reds. Second, why did John 5:44 – “How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?” (KJV) – grip me in the embryonic phase of my ministry?

It became the key verse by which I sought to be governed for over 65 years. All I know is that I was given a desire early on to please God and not man. I learned later that the fear of man is dangerous. The Bible says it is a snare.

## **What Is a Snare?**

A snare is a trap. It catches you off guard. When you are looking the other way. When you didn't think it could happen to you. It deceives. You are not likely to see it coming, or you would avoid it. It catches you unaware. You had no idea you were suddenly caught in a mess. Or that you were set up. A snare is what entangles. It is what stops you from moving on. It impedes success. It stops you from reaching your goal.

A snare is a trap used to catch birds or animals. The birds and animals you see in a zoo were caught this way. This is the way we catch fish. I am able to catch a fish because the fish does not know there is a hook in the worm when I am fishing in fresh water or in a shrimp when I am fishing in salt water. Artificial bait looks like the real thing to a fish, but it is a snare – a trap.

Because we are fallen creatures, we are vulnerable to a snare.

A snare may catch you in different ways. For example, flattery. Criticism, which may demoralize. Money, which seems so right and good because you are in financial difficulty. Discouragement. Tiredness. Taking the easy way out. The shortest route. The road most traveled. The wide gate.

We *can* fall into a trap of our own making. It may be called “natural judgment” – you reap what you sow. Yes, it can be the devil (which we will examine below). For example, the failure to pray. The godly Joshua fell into the horrible trap set by the Gibeonites all because he did not take their proposition to God in prayer but negotiated with them on their terms right on the spot (Josh. 9:14-15). Israel paid dearly for it for generations.

We are vulnerable to a trap because we don't know God's Word. “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hos. 4:6, ESV). We are commanded to “be ready to give an answer” for what we believe (1 Pet. 3:15, MEV). We are told to be able to handle the truth rightly (2 Tim. 2:15). One of my greatest concerns for the church at the present time is that people do not know their Bibles. When I started preaching in 1954 many laypeople knew their Bibles – backwards and forwards. Today, however, even many preachers don't know their Bibles.

I myself would never avoid tithing. It is not the guarantee to prosperity, but I have learned a lesson both from Scripture and experience: you cannot outgive the Lord. When I preached on tithing as a pastor there were those who understandably questioned my motives! But I am now retired and preach the importance of tithing all over the world. The only blessing I get from preaching on tithing is that I am consciously honoring God's Word.

Applying biblical truth with common sense will enable us to avoid a snare – or see it coming and avoid it. The best way to deal with a crisis is to see it coming and avoid it. The best way to keep from falling into sin is to avoid the temptation

you know you are vulnerable to.

It is my opinion that most preachers, theological teachers, professors, churches, seminaries, Christian colleges and Bible colleges go liberal for one reason: they want to appear “intellectual.” On the cutting edge. Not behind the times. To get respect from the world. It is sheer pride and the desire for the approval of man that lies behind this.

Paul said, “For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10, ESV). And yet when we speak of “pleasing man” it is a phrase that often means being motivated by the fear of man, that is, their disapproval. Their approval is worthless but so many of us foolishly let it motivate us.

### **Temptation to Protect Your Reputation**

Whereas a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches (Prov. 22:1), and no sane human being will go out looking for a bad reputation, we can turn our reputation into an idol. The last words of 1 John are, “Little children, keep yourselves from idols” (1 John 5:21, ESV). An idol is not necessarily a wooden image or stone god that people can see. It is *anything* that might lure you away from desiring the honor and praise that comes from the only God. Jesus did not think of His reputation when it came to those He chose, spent time with or affirmed. Call it fearlessness or courage, you and I should be like this.

### **Sexual Temptation**

The devil often tempts by having someone flatter you. Generally speaking, women are tempted by flattery and touch; men by sight. But men are often easily tempted by flattery too. Satan knows exactly what will tempt you and the type of person that will appeal to you. Billy Graham said that the devil seems to get 75% of God’s best people by sexual

temptation.

Joseph, the favorite son of Jacob, forced to live in Egypt, could not have known that Potiphar's wife would be a trap. Neither did he know that God had earmarked him to be a future governor of Egypt. Joseph avoided falling into her snare – and became a hero of the centuries. What makes me admire Joseph the most is that he resisted sexual temptation when no one would likely find out about it if he slept with Mrs. Potiphar. She would not tell her husband. No one in Egypt would find out unless she told it. None of his family back in Canaan would ever find out. He may have thought to himself, "I don't deserve to be here. I've done nothing wrong. God allowed this situation to happen. He would understand it if I committed adultery in this case." None of these excuses would he come up with. His reason for refusing to sleep with her were (1) your husband trusts me and (2) God knows; how can I do this thing and sin against God (Gen. 39:8-9). He had integrity and a desire to please God. And that was prior to the giving of the Ten Commandments!

God honored Joseph for his integrity and fear of God. *He will do this for you too.*

### **Financial Temptation**

"The love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs" (1 Tim. 6:10, ESV).

John described worldliness as "the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life" (1 John 2:16, ESV). The pride of life is focusing on the here and now rather than eternity. It connects sooner or later to money. And yet it is not money that is the root of all evil; it is the love of money. We all need money. There is a sense in which "money is the answer to everything" (Eccles. 10:19, NASB). And yet one

of the most alarming trends in our generation has been the emergence of the “health and wealth,” “name it and claim it,” “believe it and receive it” emphasis, especially on religious TV. It plays directly into people’s love of money and greed. I would not want to be in the shoes of these people who have built their ministry on this sort of emphasis.

## **Learn Not to Trust Yourself**

We should perhaps fear these two things: (1) fear our fear of man because of what it will lead to, and (2) fear the vast potential in your heart to displease God. Here are three scriptures you should get to know intimately:

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” (Jer. 17:9, ESV).

“For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh” (Rom. 7:18, ESV).

“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8, ESV). {eoa}

*The preceding is an excerpt from **R.T. Kendall’s** book, Fear (Charisma House 2022). For more information, or to order the book, please visit .*

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