



The Death Of Conviction

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I. INTRODUCTION -- COLLAPSE IN COLORADO

I am certain that he started with a dream, it was a dream that was driven, it was a dream bound to succeed. In fact, the dream began in his mind but was housed in his basement. It wasn't very long until the dream had outgrown the basement and the dream had to be traded in for a larger place. In fact, before all was said and done, the basement was left far behind. . . the little church had been traded for a huge empire of buildings and a mass of financial wealth. Yes, indeed, God had been good. . . or so folks thought.

He was a graduate of a leading charismatic seminary in Tulsa with a polished image and a warm personality to boot and all of that was just a portion of the equipment that this young man leaned on. He worked diligently as a young pastor. His dedication began to peak with mid-life and accomplishments and accolades became a dime a dozen. He climbed the hills and broke new ground. He advanced to Senior Pastor and then to the national director of the National Evangelical Association which is a hodge-podge of Christians that rank some 30 million strong. He was on the phone with the White House. He was busy being interviewed on TV by Barbara Walters. He was active in a friendship with James Dobson at Focus on the Family. Among all of this prestige, he was a highly sought after speaker, appearing numerous times on Christian television networks all around the world. Last year, he was listed among the 25 top influential evangelicals in the United States.

But somewhere along the way, as the mountainous walls of challenge were scaled, as the treacherous waters of change were navigated, and as the small church grew from the basement to 14,000 members, God's business slowly turned into monkey business.

When you are climbing mountains, sailing seas, and changing lives, little time is left for prayer and the tiny but ever so crucial things required in pastoral ministry. When your time is spent more on carnal calisthenics than on personal pastoral growth given in the Pastoral Epistles by Paul, it won't be long, until exposure will come. Sin is like a detective and it will be found out. It is never a matter of *if* but of when.

So on yesterday (November 4, 2006), Pastor Ted Haggard was forced out of New Life Church, the one that he started in his basement, because of behavior unbecoming of a minister. I won't spend my time with the morbid details but suffice it to say that he is (in my mind) disqualified from pulpit ministry for the rest of his life.

-All of this follows revelations of Florida Republican Senator Mark Foley, who one month ago, was exposed by his past sins.

-Sin has huge consequences.

Thomas Watson -- Sin is such a trade that whoever follows is sure to break. What did Achan get by his wedge of gold? It was a wedge to cleave asunder his soul from God. What did Judas get by his treason? He purchased a halter. What did King Ahaz get by worshiping the gods of Damascus? They were the ruin of him and all Israel, 2 Chronicles

28:23. Sin is first comical and then tragical.

Thomas Manton -- Sin is an ill guest for it always sets its lodgings on fire.

II. THE MATTER OF URIAHA

1 Kings 15:5 KJV Because David did *that which was* right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from any *thing* that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.

A. Background of Failure

-David could find no man more loyal to him than Uriah. Perhaps Ittai the Philistine might be more loyal than Uriah. But the problem with Uriah was that his blind trust and devotion to David led to his own death. . . . in fact his death warrant was signed by the man whom he completely trusted, King David.

-In 2 Samuel 11, David made a series of choices that led him to his darkest choices in his life.

-He is now about fifty and has been the king for about 20 years. Israel, under his leadership, has become a mighty nation. David has become a visionary of sorts, a powerful warrior, and recognized as a worshipper.

-But while he stands strongly as Israel's king, there is a pounding of temptation that will soon topple every bit of his resistance. One of the things with temptation is that it cannot be entertained. . . . Every man is tempted but one has to flee from the temptation.

-In looking at David's life, one finds there were three avenues that let the enemy into his life.

· **Polygamy and Lust** -- The cultural norm was for kings to acquire wives and concubines but the cultural norm was in violation of God's higher standard in Deuteronomy 17:17. Yet, because of David's power, no one confronted him. His private life was his business and could not hurt anything . . . or so it was thought. But the problem was that David's harem grew his sense of lust. The more a person indulges a sexual appetite, the more it will increase.

· **The Vulnerability of Success** -- His armies had brought great security to his city. The captured provinces poured money and resources into David's account. This money brought honor and success. But success is tricky! It can be so dangerous when one starts accessing his holdings. Pride, self-indulgence, and little accountability often comes with great success.

· **Indulgence in Leisure** -- Because of the success when the troops marched off to fight, David marched off to take a nap. This success led to an idleness. He had "paid his dues" so to speak. This idleness mixed with his lust and with the trappings of success primed him for disaster.

Ezekiel 16:49 KJV Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, *pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her* and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.

-Pride, fullness of bread, and idleness are a deadly trio that will lead you down a path to disaster.

B. The Failure

-David stirred from his nap and then he went out to walk around on the roof in the evening. Life could not be better for him until he looks across the way and the king becomes the voyeur.

-Once he saw the woman, he stopped dead in his tracks. He lingers about the edge of his balcony. The glance turns into a gaze. . . the gaze into a stare. . . the stare dissolves into a leer. . . . suddenly the king is deformed into a deranged man.

-His lust causes him to lose all sense of perception and of the danger of a decision that he is about to make. He loses his regard for his position in the Kingdom and he loses his fear of the future penalty.

-He enquired of his servants as to her identity. When they told him, he did not even heed their veiled warning, "She is Bathsheba. . . The wife of Uriah the Hittite." David's conscience is so numbed that the radar doesn't even register the warning.

-In a very short period of time, she is standing in front of the king. Gravity follows and David breaks the laws of God and violates the trust of his family. He has abused his position.

1. Sin's Penalty

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (in his book, *Temptation*) described what happened in David's life when he threw caution to the wind and his desire took over:

At this moment God is quite unreal to us, he loses all reality, and only desire for the creature is real; the only reality is the devil. Satan does not here fill us with hatred of God, but with forgetfulness of God. . . The lust thus aroused envelops the mind and will of man in deepest darkness. The powers of clear discrimination and of decision are taken from us.

-This is the huge problem with sin that few really see. In fact, this generation has lost their fear of what is going to happen to them because of their sin.

Sin brings a man low in the eyes of God: **Psalms 14:3 KJV** They are all gone aside, they are *all* together become filthy: *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one.

Sin brings down the intellect of a man: **1 Corinthians 2:14 KJV** But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

Sin brings a man down with afflictions: **Psalms 107:39-40 KJV** Again, they are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow. [40] He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, *where there is* no way.

Sin brings a man down with depression: **Psalms 53:5 KJV** There were they in great fear, *where* no fear was:

Sin brings a spiritual lethargy: **Isaiah 29:10-11 KJV** For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered. [11] And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which *men* deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it *is* sealed:

Sin will lead to desertion: **Psalms 88:6-7 KJV** Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. [7] Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted *me* with all thy waves.

Sin ultimately will turn you into Hell: **Psalms 9:16-17 KJV** The LORD is known *by* the judgment *which* he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. [17]The wicked shall be turned into hell, *and* all the nations that forget God.

-One of the keys to revival is that we face up to sin and repent. . . . What are you waiting for?

III. KILLING URIAH

A. Stolen Waters and Secret Bread and Uriah's Integrity

-The thing that makes sin even so much more dangerous and damnable is keyed in to us in the Proverbs:

Proverbs 9:17 KJV Stolen waters are sweet, and bread *eaten* in secret is pleasant.

-The stolen waters and secret bread that David consumed soon confront him. The consequences of sin are bitter and the taste will linger on his lips for the rest of his life.

-Panic ensues when David finds that Bathsheba is expecting a child. Instead of confessing the sin before God and his counselors, he puts into motion a cover-up. For the first time in his life, David tries to sweep his sin under the doormat.

-He further trashes his character and integrity when he brings Uriah home from the battlefield. David's plan is to send him home to Bathsheba and then all the bases will be covered.

-What David did not factor into his plan was the strength of Uriah's character? While Uriah was supposed to be at home with Bathsheba, he never made it that far. . . . he slept on the front porch of the palace with David's servants and guards.

-With sunrise, David discovers that Uriah has not made it home that night, he enquires as to the reason. Uriah's answer is stunning!

2 Samuel 11:11 KJV And Uriah said unto David, The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? *as thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing.*

-David is rebuked by the integrity of one of his soldiers—a man who is so completely committed to the nation, to his king, to his wife, and to the Lord.

-David tries one more time that night. . . . He gets Uriah so drunk that he can hardly stand. . . Then David gently pushes him in the direction of his home but Uriah proves that there is more self-control in his drunken state than David had when he was sober!

B. The Escalation to Murder

-Now David is faced with a huge dilemma. . . nothing can cover up this breach in his life. . . nothing except murder.

-So the plan escalates and David writes out a death warrant:

2 Samuel 11:14-15 KJV And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent *it* by the hand of Uriah. [15] And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die.

-Once the death warrant is signed and sealed, the delivery comes through Uriah.

- I wonder if it ever crossed Uriah's mind that he was carrying his own death sentence?
- I wonder a stray thought flitted across his mind as to why he had been summoned back to Jerusalem?
- I wonder if Bathsheba knew the contents of the letter in her husband's hand?
- I wonder if Uriah hugged David before he left his courts that day?
- I wonder if David's tears were noticed by Uriah?
- I wonder how long that David watched one of his top soldiers ride off into the wilderness for the last time?
- I wonder if David had any misgivings four hours later?

-All of those questions remained unanswered to this point. . . .

C. The Advancing Kingdom

-Joab, David's general gains his instructions and sends Uriah into the very teeth of the battle. As the kingdom advances, lives of men are eclipsed.

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-In the throes of the battle, Uriah died. . . . But along with Uriah, the Bible states, "and there fell some of the people of the servants of David." Along with Uriah, there were other valiant men who died along with him.

IV. THE THINGS THAT DIE WITH URIAH

A. The Meaning of A Name

-There is a message in Uriah's name.

- **Brown-Driver-Briggs:** Jehovah is my light.
- **Strong's:** The root word indicates that the meaning is "light."

-When you place them together, you find the meaning is "the flame or light of Jehovah."

Psalms 119:105-106 KJV Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.[106] I have sworn, and I will

perform *it*, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.

Psalms 119:130-131 KJV The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple. [131] I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments.

-The difficulty with David murdering Uriah was that he was killing the “light of the Lord” in his life.

- He murdered the convicting commandment of God.
 - He destroyed the clean commandments of the Lord.
 - He removed the influence of the strong statutes of the Lord.
 - He silenced the voice of a clear conscience.
- When Uriah died, there existed a death of conviction.

B. The Collateral Damage

-Not only did Uriah die in the battle but we read that there were other servants of David that died with Uriah.

-There are times that people have raised the issue of restoration with me. . . restoration is always available but there are some damaging effects that comes when people allow themselves to get caught up in sinful behavior.

-Frankly, I must state that over the years with my own study of the Word and with personal observation, I believe that sexual immorality disqualifies a man from the office/role of a pastor and from pulpit ministry.

- When a patient has a heart attack, this means that some loss of heart muscle is present and no matter how much medicine, treatment, or rehab is made available to the patient, the heart will rarely recover back to 100%.
- When a patient has smoked two packs of cigarettes a day for 40 years, he may quit smoking but there will not be a full recovery of his lung capacity.
- When a patient is diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, he sometimes may have a Whipple Procedure (although rare), there are great deficits that come with this particular surgery. He may recover life but never full function of life.
- When a patient has to endure the awful insult of a head injury, the majority of the time there is a lingering deficit that (if the patient lives) will battle with for the rest of their life.

-This is why it is so crucial that spiritual leaders be marked with a prevailing sense of integrity, character, and transparency.

-The other servants of David died also. When the light of Uriah’s life was snuffed out, the servants that were with him died too. When we allow sin to wreck our lives and our relationship with God there are some other things that die too.

- Sincerity is squeezed out by regret.
- Love is traded for suspicion.
- Loyalty is replaced by a consuming love of self.
- Sacrifice gives in to stubbornness.
- Innocence dies out to guilt.
- Humility is destroyed by hardheartedness.
- Kindness takes a back seat to anger.
- Inner peace will give in to depression.

-All of these things enter our lives when we kill the voice of conviction. . . I also would add that even God will have a challenging time trying to restore these things back into your life.

-If you think this message is hard. . . I have a feeling that Ted Haggard would pay greatly if he could have heard a

message like this 3 ½ years ago. Then the convicting voice of the Spirit would have at least been able to give him an opportunity to make some adjustments and repent.

-You never know. . . this might be the most important message that you will hear this year.

Romans 13:14 KJV But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

V. CONCLUSION -- WHAT SHALL WE DO?

-John Piper wrote a paper--written years ago (1995)--on [how Christian leaders should avoid sexual sin](#). Piper lists ten potential pitfalls and proposes ten protections against them:

· **PITFALL:** Falling in love with the present world.

PROTECTION: Think long and hard about the deadly poison of world-love and ponder the never-ending delights of the mountain spring of God's approval and fellowship and beauty.

PITFALL: Loss of horror at offending the majesty of God's holiness through sin.

PROTECTION: Meditate on the Biblical truth that all our acts are acts toward God and not just toward man, and that God is so holy and pure that he will not countenance the slightest sin, but hates it with omnipotent hatred, and that the holiness of God is the most valuable treasure in the universe and the very deepest of delights to those whose way is pure.

PITFALL: A sense of immunity from accountability and authority.

PROTECTION: Submit yourself to a council of Biblically minded, spiritually wise advisers.

PITFALL: Succumbing to itching ears as love of truth evaporates.

PROTECTION: Cultivate a love for truth, even in its smallest details, and turn a deaf ear to the desires of men to have their ears scratched with vague moralisms that massage them in their sin.

PITFALL: A vanishing attention to Scripture.

PROTECTION: Give yourself untiringly to the study, meditation and memorization of Holy Scripture.

PITFALL: A growing disregard for the spiritual good of his followers.

PROTECTION: Labor in praying and caring to stir up your heart to love all your people.

PITFALL: Disregard for the Biblical mystery of marriage.

PROTECTION: Remind yourself repeatedly that your marriage is a living drama of Christ's relationship to the church.

PITFALL: Compartmentalizing of the leader's life.

PROTECTION: View everything—absolutely everything—as woven together by its relationship to the value of the glory of God.

PITFALL: A sense of being above the necessity of suffering and self-denial.

PROTECTION: Never forget the promise: "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). And never forget that the Son of Man had no place to lay his head (Luke 9:58). And develop a Biblical theology of futility and suffering, especially from Romans 8:17-30.

PITFALL: Giving in to self-pity under the pressures and loneliness of leadership.**PROTECTION:** Embrace the essence of the doctrine that no one who suffers the loss of any earthly blessing in the service of Christ will fail to be repaid a hundred-fold now and in the age to come eternal life (Mark 10:29-30).

-The summons to prayer for repentance, for commitment to the call that God placed in our lives, and for a hedge to be placed around us.