

Two Dangers

#0317

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—July 16, 1976

Tonight I want to study with you two great dangers to which we are exposed. The first danger is the danger of missing a blessing, rejecting light because of the men who bring it.

Turn please to Luke the 10th chapter and the 16th verse. The first verse of this 10th chapter tells of the Lord's appointment of the 70. He had trained the 12 apostles, ordained them, and sent them out. And during the time that they were busy in their evangelistic field trips, Christ gave some attention to training more people. Included in these were the 70. As far as we know, these were not ordained, but they had had some experience with Jesus, and now they were sent forth. He gave them instruction that you could read here in the 10th chapter of Luke. He spoke very directly of their responsibility and authority:

"He that hearth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me" Luke 10:16.

It's quite a responsibility to be a messenger for God, whether as an ordained minister or a layman. But it is the message and not the messenger that we need to be thinking about. God uses people that you and I might never select. He puts His treasure in earthen vessels that the glory may be given to God. He sometimes picks out men that we would find unacceptable, but then He may give a special ministry. We need to beware of rejecting light because of the men who bring it. We read:

"To reject the Lord's servants is to reject Christ Himself" *The Desire of Ages*, page 489.

Someone says, "If I could find a messenger that was like Jesus, I'd be more inclined to listen." Yes, it would be helpful, wouldn't it? And all who carry God's message should seek to be as much like the Savior as possible. But for reasons that God knows better than we, He oftentimes uses men and women who still have faults and failings. And if we stumble over those and reject the message, God holds us responsible for refusing truth.

One of the reasons is this: God wants us to accept truth on its own merit. He wants us to listen to truth because it is truth, not because of the man who brings it. We have a number of examples of this in the Bible. There are cases where God used men who either had made mistakes in the past or might even be making mistakes at that time. Yet they were being used as God's ambassadors.

Think of Peter at Pentecost. There he stood up before thousands of people and bore his witness and gave the call to repentance. I wonder if anyone in the

audience said, "What is that fellow doing anyway? Didn't we hear him less than two months ago cursing and swearing? What business has he got to be up there?"

Was it true that he'd failed the Lord? Miserably. But thank God he'd fallen on his face, and with sorrow and repentance, Jesus had accepted him, and now he was giving a message that brought conviction to three thousand souls. Thank God, in these closing scenes of the Loud Cry into which we're soon to enter, God will use men who have made mistakes. We need to beware lest in self-righteous phariseeism or in any other state of mind, we miss the message because we know faults and weaknesses about the messenger. Do you see what I mean? We must learn to *distinguish* between the message and the messenger. The message of God, the truth of God, is infallible. Men are not infallible; they make mistakes. We're to carefully consider the message they bring and be sure it comes from the Word of God. But when the truth of God is spoken, we must be prepared to accept it regardless of *who* the messenger is. That's the point.

I've spoken of Peter's failures before Pentecost. So while Peter never descended to the depths of defeat after Pentecost as he had before, he was not infallible. You remember the apostle Paul, in speaking of an experience at Antioch when Peter dissembled. At first, he did one thing and then something else, depending on the prejudices of the people He was with. Paul says in Galatians:

"I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed"
Galatians 2:11.

But Peter made mistakes. But both before and after that Antioch experience, Peter was being used of God mightily and marvelously. And what a shame it would have been if the converts of Paul had said, "We listen to Paul, but we have our doubts about Peter. I heard that Peter's going to preach today. I don't think I'll go. I remember what he did before Pentecost. And even lately, up there at Antioch, Paul had to rebuke him openly. I'll go next Sabbath to hear Paul when he'll preach."

Turn to 1 Corinthians the first chapter, and you'll see what Paul writing by Inspiration says about this kind of business:

"Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am
of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of
Christ. Is Christ divided?" 1 Corinthians 1:12-13.

What's the answer? No, Christ is not divided. Now turn to the third chapter, the fourth verse:

"For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of
Apollos; are ye not carnal?" 1 Corinthians 3:4.

What does carnal mean? Fleshly, unconverted, a natural human heart. It's natural for people to line up with parties and leaders. We see it in our country today. That's the way governments seem to run. But the church of Christ was never meant to run that way. "One is our Master, even Christ; and we're all brethren" (Matthew

23:8). And we're all listening to hear what *Jesus* will say. He may use the humblest instrument. Notice what He says in 1 Corinthians 1:26:

"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in His presence. That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" 1 Corinthians 1:26–29, 31.

If I were *really* hungry and someone brought me a piece of bread, I don't think I would insist that he had to be a general before I'd take it. I think I'd take it even from a lieutenant, possibly even a private could offer me the bread, if I were really hungry. What do you say? Oh, yes.

Speaking of Peter's experience and how he had to be rebuked by Paul, but Paul himself had a problem occasionally. You remember the Bible says that on one occasion, he and Barnabas were about to start out on a preaching tour to places they had been before and raised up a number of churches. When Barnabas wanted to take a young man by the name of John Mark. It happened to be his nephew. John Mark had been with them before, and when the work got hard and the difficulties got great, what did John Mark do? He went home. Paul was through with him, but Barnabas wasn't. And so, as Paul and Barnabas discussed it, it came to the place where Barnabas said they must take John Mark, and Paul said they must not. He had deserted them before, and they were going into some hard places again. Barnabas may have argued that he thinks the boy may have learned. Paul may have argued that he thinks they need someone they can depend upon. The Bible says the contention was so *sharp* between them that they'd parted asunder.

If you'd been back there and heard it, what would you have done? Which one would you have like to hear at prayer meeting or preach Sabbath: Paul or Barnabas? You might have washed your hands of both of them. But God didn't. God kept on using both of them. Barnabas went to Cyprus and took John Mark with him. Paul chose Silas, and later Timothy. They went on to Galatia and finally on to Europe. That's why you and I are here tonight. Oh, my dear friends. Let us let God use everybody He can get, and let us use the ones He wants. And let us be willing to listen to anyone God sends with a message from Heaven. I repeat: if we're hungry, we're not looking to see the rank of the man that brings it or the color of his coat. We're listening to hear the message of God, like little Samuel, we're saying, "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth."

In the book *Testimonies to Ministers*, the Prophet to the remnant says on page 106, listen to these wonderful words:

"The Lord often works where we least expect Him;

He surprises us by revealing His power through instruments of His own choice, while He passes by the men to whom we have looked as those through whom light should come. God desires us to receive the truth upon its own merits—because it is truth”
Testimonies to Ministers, page 106.

I have been preaching on this campus for a third of a century, and I know that God has blessed from time to time as the Word of God has been presented. But, brethren, what a sad day it would be if the time should come when we should miss a blessing that God wants to give us through *varied* gifts, through different messengers, through men of His own appointment. Oh, let us open our hearts wide and let us open our ears to hear the message of God, letting God speak through whom He will. What do you say?

“The Lord often works where we least expect Him; He surprises us by revealing His power through instruments of His own choice, while He passes by the men to whom we have looked as those through whom light should come. God desires us to receive the truth upon its own merits—because it is truth” *Ibid.*

Now, what did I tell you I was going to study with you tonight? Two dangers. We’ve studied one of them. There’s another one. The first danger is the danger of missing the blessing because we don’t like or don’t appreciate or don’t recognize the particular messenger that God uses to bring the message. We would *prefer* to have it come through another channel. That’s one danger. We’ve seen how to guard against that: To have our ears open, and our hearts open, willing for God to use whomever He chooses to present truth to us. Now, the other danger is the danger of being deceived, the danger of accepting error because of the men who bring it. Just as it is possible for us to be prejudice against men, and thereby miss a blessing if they bring truth, so it is possible for us to be prejudice in *favor* of men and thereby miss a blessing if they present *error*.

There are two ways in which this can happen. To get one of those ways clear, let’s look at 2 Corinthians 11:13–15:

“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.

So there is the danger in opening our ears to everything. There is danger in being deceived by the representatives of Satan who masquerade as the apostles of Christ. It’s seldom that Satan appears for what he is. It’s seldom that men openly advocate listening to lies and call them lies. Usually, error claims to be true. So the

apostle says to be careful, beware. Don't be deceived by false apostles claiming to be apostles of Christ. Jesus said:

“Ye shall know them by their fruits” Matthew 7:16.

“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” Isaiah 8:20.

No matter how beautifully a man may present a message, no matter how polished or attractive is his presentation, it does not change a lie into truth. It does not change a stone into bread. God wants us to be wise to discern error and quick to refuse it.

When food is brought to some animals, they sniff it. The Lord has given them an instinct. God wants us to cultivate the ability to discern.

As a friend of mine put it, “I don't have to drink a gallon of sour milk to find out whether it's sweet or sour.” No, you don't have to at all.

There are some books you can tell by the color what's in them. If you should have any doubt, just open it and look, a sentence would be enough. A child of God will put down a book that he knows would lead him astray.

But somebody says, “I think I'm wise enough that I can read anything and still not have my mind changed.”

I say very simply and earnestly, “Don't fool yourself.” As the apostle puts it:

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” Galatians 6:7.

We are not only in danger by being deceived by pretenders, men that Satan has sent who claim to speak for God. We are in danger (and this is the one I especially want to focus on) of following good men, men that God is using, in their eccentricities and their mistakes and their failures.

We'll take a few examples of this. Think of Gideon. The book of Judges tells us the wonderful story of how the Lord selected that young man and gave him a commission to deliver Israel. After repeated experiences in prayer and guidance, he led the 300 against the camp of Midian, and God gave a wonderful victory. From then on, Israel looked to Gideon as their judge. But the Bible says that Gideon led the people into idolatry. He had them bring the golden earrings which was a part of the spoils of war in the battle that he had won, and he made an idol. And the people came and they worshiped it. Who led them into it? Gideon, the man that *God* had used to bring a mighty deliverance. It's hard for you and me to understand how Gideon would do that. He wouldn't do it today if he lived in our country, because that isn't the way men go astray from God. But if we had lived back there, we would have seen that was the popular thing. That was the thing the crowds were doing—making

idols and worshiping them. Today we have other ways of departing from God. My point is: A man that God used in a *marvelous* way still made mistakes and led Israel.

Coming down to the book of First Samuel, we think of the experience of Eli. Eli was a godly man. He was a priest at the sanctuary at Shiloh. He was a wonderful, spiritual man. But his boys were corrupt. They were vile. Instead of *dealing* with them, laboring with them, and trying to get them to change, and if he couldn't, putting them out of the Priest office, he allowed the thing to go on. Oh, he gave them some mild reproofs, he said, "Oh, the things I hear about you boys aren't good." But he let them go right on. And the result was, dear friends, that God had to allow the enemies of Israel to bring terrible defeat in which the Ark of God was taken, and those two young men were slain. Eli, the father, died of a broken heart and a broken neck as he heard the tidings from the battle.

I repeat, dear friends: A man may be a spiritual leader and yet have faults and weaknesses, which have a tremendous influence. We need to be careful lest we follow good men, just as there is danger in *rejecting* that which men bring because of their weaknesses, there is danger of following men in their weakness. Do you see the two dangers? Very important.

Think of King Solomon. God Himself gave Solomon the name Jedidiah, beloved of the Lord. In his youth as he was called to the kingdom, in humility he sought the Lord earnestly for wisdom. He said, "I am but a little child, and I don't know how to go out or come in before these people. Give therefore thy servant a wise and understanding heart." God heard his prayer. God promised to give him wisdom so he would be the wisest man in this world, and he was. He built the temple according to the divine specifications. All the kings of the earth came to Jerusalem to hear the wisdom of God, as revealed through King Solomon.

But, oh friends, that man who had done such a wonderful work for God, and had lived in communion with the King of Heaven, that man led Israel into apostasy. He multiplied riches, and God had told him not to it. He multiplied wives, and God had told him not to do that. He multiplied horses and chariots and other status symbols, and God had told him not to do that. As the result, the whole *nation* went into apostasy, and after Solomon's death was divided and never did carry out the glorious design that God intended. Who led them? Solomon—the man who had led them in the worship of God, the man to whom God had witnessed personally in vision.

So I repeat: Beware of men. There is danger in *following* men.

We looked tonight at these two dangers—the danger of *missing* the blessing of light because we see something in the messenger that we don't like, real or apparent; on the other hand, the danger of *following* leadership even contrary to the will of God just because they *claim* to be sent of God, or they may even *be* men of God—men that God has used and even may be using.

In Isaiah the second chapter, we have this word of counsel ringing down the ages to our time:

“Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils:
for wherein is he to be accounted of?” Isaiah 2:22.

What’s the first word? *Cease*. What does that mean? Stop. If God uses a man to bring a message, test the message. Listen to the truth of God. And if it is from God's holy word and is supported by the inspired statements, *accept it* whether you like the man or not, my dear friends. On the other hand, no matter how mightily God may have used a man, if he sets forth either in his life or in his teaching that which is not in harmony with the inspired standard, *do not* follow him, my friends. Do not fall into that trap. “Cease ye from man.”

We have one pattern—the Lord Jesus Christ. We have one example—the life of our Lord. Oh, I’m so glad we can follow Him. *He* will never disappoint us. We can hear His words speaking in this Book from Genesis to Revelation. He’s calling us to a higher and holier standard. Let's come up and make Him glad by *listening*, listening, listening.

Now, we’re going to spend a little while in witness. Those who would like, just feel free to come up. Several of you can be sitting, and we'll have a good time in praise to our Lord.

[Testimony service]

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