

One Disappointment

Disappointment is a part of life, often the natural reaction of an honest assessment of humanity. The trenches in which we fight are mired with temptation and littered with wounded souls that somewhere along life bogged down. The disappointment increases exponentially the closer or longer the relationship with the fallen soul. We hear of some blight on a good name or a good work and all we can do is shake our head and survey the carnage that is sure to follow: shame on the individual and shame for the Lord's church.

I have seen great men and women fall to the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life and it is not a pretty picture. No man is an island and, therefore, the Tsunami that wreaks havoc on the guilty often capsizes innocent barques in its wake. There must be safeguards that will dull the blow of such seamy headlines as: "Satan Sinks Another Soul."

First, we are human. Since Adam, ***"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"*** (Romans 3:23). The shock-factor of exposed sin is often equivalent to the status to which a person has been elevated. I have seen preachers promoted to obscene levels of honor by well-meaning people only to be devastated by the discovery of a fatal flaw. Valuing a studied opinion is not cause for enshrinement. Paul warns: ***"For I say... to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think"*** (Romans 12:3). Elders, preachers (especially) and Christians in general are human and no matter what contribution they bestow on the brotherhood, they are still flawed; ***"esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake"*** (1 Thessalonians 5:13) but never lose sight of their humanity.

Second, we can steel ourselves to needless disappointment by maintaining a healthy degree of cynicism. We set ourselves up for a fall when we ignore those frequent warnings against false teachers and closet predators, especially when they burst suddenly from personal darkness into public light. Paul warned about bad apples in the church (Romans 16:18) and encouraged us, not to defend, but to ***"expose them"*** (Ephesians 5:11) even ***"from among yourselves"*** (Acts 20:30). Local talent does not imply security; it just makes it harder to deal with when they fall off the stage.

Third, and finally, we cannot hang the glory of the church on anyone but Christ. When a denominational "pastor" loses face, his "ministry" goes belly up, hence, the difference with the Lord's church. We are all ***"fellow workers,"*** (Philippians 4:3), ***"faithful unto death"*** (Revelation 2:10). Therefore, ***"if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness"*** (Galatians 6:1).

Disappointments will happen. The overwrought Paul must have written on a tearstained page, ***"Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world"*** (2 Timothy 4:10). However, one disappointment does not constitute a lost cause.