

The Anatomy of a Fall

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Introduction: We should never be overconfident about the threat of our adversary Satan.

- A. We need to be made aware of his ways and tactics. **(2 Cor 2:11)**
 - 1. A good football coach studies films and prepares his team!
 - 2. In medical practice autopsies are preformed to learn about fatal diseases so future treatments and cures can be found.
- B. One of the greatest challenges we face in the church is to take this threat seriously! **(1 Cor 10:12)**
 - 1. I found old pictures and directories of churches where I preached 15-20 years ago and noted how many had fallen away! What would we find here?
 - 2. If I was able to go back in time and warn each of them I doubt that they would take it seriously! “Why I would never leave the Lord!”
 - 3. Sometimes football coaches overly warn their team. (Ex. Bear Bryant in 1977) We need to know that the Lord never exaggerates!
 - 3. Let us go to the Bible and analyze a fall, step by step. May we learn from one who fell away and faced the sifting of Satan and then returned to God.
 - 4. We know this man as the apostle Peter. Let us consider the steps he took to a fall.

I. Overconfidence

- A. What attack could Satan possibly use to cause a personal disciple of Jesus to fall?
 - 1. Could people who know and confess the truth fall? Of course they can! Many think the battle is over when we know the truth. It has only begun.
 - 2. Satan will find our weakness and exploit it. What is a common weakness among those who have knowledge and experience? Pride! **(Prov 16:18; 1 Cor 8:1-2)**
 - 3. When we become overconfident we find warnings about apostasy and personal sin as irrelevant at best and may even respond with hostility. Some will label others as “watchdogs.”
- B. Jesus Himself was not able to get Peter to take His warnings seriously. **(Lk 22:31-33)**
 - 1. Peter had been tested before and stood! **(Jn 6:66-69)**
 - 2. Peter publicly declared His intentions! He never imagined he could fall.
 - 3. In all of this he never took Jesus seriously. He should have been chilled by Jesus’ statement and asked for help. How many Peters are here today?

II. Lack of Preparation

- A. Pride always looks for praise and pursues selfish goals. A proud person is a poor listener!
 - 1. Jesus tried to get Peter prepared as He was preparing for the nearing time of trial. **(Mt 26:36-40)**
 - 2. Real preparation is hard and is not convenient. Pride causes one to deny and hide their weaknesses rather than see and prepare!
 - 3. How many Christians here refuse to see their weaknesses? “I have been a Christian for many years, I cannot admit this!” “A Christian should not have these problems!”
- B. Peter “prepared” for the wrong battle! **(Mt 26:34-35)**
 - 1. Peter failed to recognize that without preparation Satan chooses the battleground.
 - 2. Many fail to recognize how sin comes into our lives. We are ready to die in the quick glorious battle but are helpless to resist the gradual steps to sin.

3. Peter drew his sword and was shocked to find that he was rebuked! He now ran with the other disciples. **(Mt 26:50-56)**

III. Distance from God's People

- A. Satan uses different devices to accomplish this goal.
 1. Within many Christians Satan plants and then waters the seeds of bitterness.
 2. With others Satan takes the guilt and then uses it as a wedge to drive one further away! Here is where pride causes one to run further away rather than return.
 3. Peter is now torn in two in his heart. He wants to stand with Jesus but he is afraid to face his shame. All he can do now is to follow Him "at a distance." **(Mt 26:58)**
- B. Many Christians reach a point in their life where they feel uncomfortable around other Christians. Why?
 1. When we fail to deal properly with sin our conscious will make us miserable! **(Prov 28:1)**
 2. Many do not realize the process taking place where they increasingly are pulling away from Christians. They may be in the process of running from God.
 3. Who are your best friends? Where is your heart?

IV. Comfort with Worldly People

- A. Pride hates to admit wrong and runs from rebuke. There is a group of people who will "accept you as you are" as long as you do not bother them.
 1. Jesus described the attitude of the world. **(Jn 15:19)**
 2. It will not be long where you will join the world in whispering about those "self-righteous" people. **(Ps 1:1)**
 3. Do you really think that this "bar room crowd" really cares anything about you? Real love will tell you what you need that includes occasional rebuke! **(Mk 10:21)**
- B. Satan has Peter right where he wants him.
 1. Now Peter is pressured to go further! **(Mt 26:69-74)**
 2. We need to remember that Satan is relentless! We need help. **(1 Pt 5:8-9)**
 3. Peter who was afraid to admit his weakness publicly now demonstrates it for all to see and remember for all time!
 4. When you turn to the ungodly for emotional comfort you have made the worst possible move! Remember God's warning. **(1 Cor 15:33)**
 5. There are some Christians you should not associate with! **(1 Cor 5:9-11)**

V. Overwhelming Guilt

- A. Peter was fortunate to have this painful experience. **(Mt 26:75; Lk 22:61)**
 1. Some enter sin so gradually that they just do not care!
 2. Some stumble into sin and then face this painful ordeal. This can be for good.
 3. Some lie their way out of the immediate consequences. This is never good.
- B. Peter had two possible reactions.
 1. To run from God by excuse, blaming others or simply quitting.
 2. To face and confess his sin and start over in the work of God.
 3. Judas was in the same boat as Peter and chose suicide. Satan lied to Judas that there was no way back. This is never true! **(Mt 27:4-5)**
- C. The Lord pursued Peter! **(Jn 21:15-17)**

Conclusion: Let us with the wisdom of faith never fall from the Lord. **(2 Pt 1:10-11)**

- A. There are many who fall who do not return to faithfulness!
- B. Let us never forget the way back and let us be helpers to those that return!