
Beware of a Satanic Setup

By David Wilkerson

December 4, 1989 Paul introduced the possibility of a fall into a satanic setup in his letters to Timothy. He understood the dangers of a satanic trap or snare: "...lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil" (1 Timothy 3:7). But he also gave us a recovery from that satanic trap: "...they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (2 Timothy 2:26).

The Greek word for "snare" used in both of these Scriptures means a stratagem, a setup, the preparation of a noose for the neck. It refers to a well-conceived trap. "The proud have hid a trap for me ... they have set snares for me" (Psalm 140:5). It is clear that Satan is building a gallows.

Recently the New York Times had a pitiful front-page picture of a fallen evangelist in handcuffs. He was being led to a waiting car that would take him as a prisoner to a psychiatric ward. He was weeping! Incoherent! Chained!

Our church wept that night at our prayer meeting as we prayed for him and his family. It was not a time for judging but a time for broken-hearted repentance and sympathy for our fallen brother.

The following night I spent a long time on the telephone talking to a well-known pastor. He had just resigned from his pulpit, charged with sexual indiscretions. He is a dear friend; and I plan to stick with him through his recovery so that he "may recover himself out of the snare of the devil."

He told me that when he saw on the news the American evangelist who was so stressed out and broken, he cried out, "O God don't let that happen to me. I don't want to end up in such a pitiful condition."

I hear Christians asking, "How could a man of God, so mightily used by the Holy Spirit, do such horrible things? How could there be such a failure when a man is so touched by God?"

Satan had set a trap, a well-conceived, well-planned snare for these dear brothers. They walked right into the devil's noose and he pulled the trap door to hang them.

I don't care who you are, how holy and pure you are, how long you've walked with God, or how old or young you are. I don't care how much you insist you couldn't do anything like that - beware! The devil is out to trap you, too. "The thief cometh not but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy" (John 10:10).

Do you know that all of us have the capacity to fall just as low, just as far into horrible sin with all its deception, cover-ups, lies and uncontrollable lusts?

When I saw the fallen evangelist's picture I did not ask, "How could he do such a thing? How could he do such foolish things with his eyes wide open?" Instead, I wept saying inwardly, "Lord, that could have been me! We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Lord, if all my past sins were uncovered - my motives that were impure, my lies, my foolishness, I would be just as guilty. Somehow You got me out of the devil's trap before the devil could put his noose around my neck. You put Your holy fear in me and pulled me out of the snare laid for me."

Looking back I now see where the devil had laid numerous well-planned and intricate traps because

he wanted to destroy me. I can say with David, "The wicked (Satan) have laid a snare (trap) for me: yet I erred not from Thy precepts" (Psalm 119:10). "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler: the snare is broken, and we are escaped" (Psalm 124:7).

But in these final days it is not good enough to look back at the satanic setups from which we have escaped. We need to be on guard, warned, and aware of what is out there in front of us.

If you are going all the way with God, with a determination to obey and pursue holiness, you can be 100% sure Satan has a hellish setup planned for you. Watch out! He has a noose for your neck, too! "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

How does Satan set up and trap God's chosen? We are not to be ignorant of his tricks and devices! Don't believe we have all the answers; after all, we see through a glass darkly. But we must realize that Satan can come against us in all seasons: in our highs and our lows, in good times and bad times. His lies are so devious and his traps and setups so camouflaged with charm and beauty that we can only depend on the Holy Spirit and the Word of God to expose it all to us.

David was trapped in a satanic setup. He walked right into the trap Satan set for him and was caught. It's been said, "If a person cannot learn from David's terrible fall into sin, he doesn't want to learn."

I've personally learned more about the dangers of sin from David's life than from any other example in the Bible. I learned not only how Satan traps, but also the steps leading to entrapment (read 1 and 2 Samuel). It's all here in this tragic story. I won't go over all the sad details, but I want us all to be warned of what goes on to bring about such a fall.

The devil set David up when he was at his peak physically, financially, and spiritually. David was not hiding in a cave, nor was he a penniless fugitive running for his life. He was not in a pit of discouragement or depressed or burdened down with cares. He was on top of the world! No man on earth was more blessed than David at that time. He was prosperous, greatly loved, and greatly feared.

David had been on the front lines fighting the good fight of faith. He was victorious in every battle! No enemy could stand before him.

There are at least seven major wars listed in a single verse. These were great wars with ferocious enemies. David literally slew thousands, taking multitudes as prisoners. Twice in 2 Samuel 8 we read that the Lord gave David victory withersoever he went"... The Syrians became servants to David, and brought gifts. And the Lord preserved David withersoever he went" (2 Samuel 8:6), and "All they of Edom became David's servants... and the Lord preserved David withersoever he went" (verse 14).

David was feared by all his enemies because they knew God was with him! "David got him a name (became famous) when he returned from smiting of the Syrians" (2 Samuel 8:13). What a wonderful place to be with God: blessed and enjoying guidance, victory, and a good name among all men.

His family also enjoyed God's blessings! "David's sons were chief rulers" (2 Samuel 8:18). But following his sin, his family disintegrated. David's son, Amnon raped his own sister Tamar; Absalom rebelled and eventually was killed; Adonijah also rebelled and was put to death; and eventually there was the apostasy of Solomon. But before he sinned, his family was united, he enjoyed their love and

support, and blessings were growing on all sides. There was peace at home and his family was in control.

David loved his church and sat under godly shepherds. "Zadok... and Ahimelec... were the priests" (2 Samuel 8:17). The Zadok priesthood represented "a priesthood who ministered unto the Lord". It was holy, sanctified, and approved by God. He was ministered to by the faithful prophet Nathan who loved David but was uncompromising.

David was not starved for the Word. He was not in the midst of a spiritual famine. The Word he received was pure and according to God's heart. There was no false doctrine, no backslidden shepherd, and no polluted gospel. He sat under the purest, strongest message of the time.

David was at the peak of his generosity. He was so caring and loving that he sought out ways to show his concern of others. "And David said: Is there yet any that is left after the house of Saul that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" (2 Samuel 9:11). He took Mephibosheth, of the house of Saul, into his home, "and (he) did eat continually at the king's table; and was lame in both his feet" (2 Samuel 9:13). David was not wallowing in his luxury; not had he become self-centered. Rather, he was abounding in generosity and over-flowing with love and concern for the hurting.

We are most vulnerable to pride at the peak of blessings. Prosperity is a much bigger temptation to sin than poverty. Watch out when the blessings are on all sides! When did Satan set up the famous evangelists who have now fallen? When they were at the peak of prosperity. He caught them when it looked as if God had opened the windows of heaven on them! They were loved, popular, and blessed above all others.

I. We Mistake God's Blessings For God's Approval! God can and does bless those He approves. Yet, He may allow great suffering to those He approves. He also blesses, for a season, many who have compromised. We tend to think, "I must be doing something right, I'm so blessed!" Up to this point God has mightily blessed America but that does not mean we are approved by heaven.

A young pastor told me how Satan held him for five years in the trap of adultery. He said, "All the time I was sinning, lying, cheating, my ministry prospered. I wept all the time. I felt so close to the hurts of all my people. The devil made me believe God couldn't be too mad at me because all was going so well... until the bottom dropped out one day." Many have said the same thing: God didn't seem angry; the offerings kept increasing; the blessings didn't stop; and it seemed as if God were still with me in all I did.

II. We Have a Deep-Seated Lust That Is Not Yet Crucified. All through the blessings, David's secret lust was growing. He had been compromising the commands of God in sins that his society merely winked at, even though they were contrary to God's Word. He was heading for a fall.

David was constantly taking to himself additional wives; Ahonoam, Chileab, Abigail, Maccab, Haggith, Abital, Eglah. Since having numerous wives was acceptable and approved by his society, David used his society's tolerance for extra wives to satisfy a growing lust. He had a deep-rooted sensuality, so he took on attractive wives to satisfy this disorderly lust. But rather than it being satisfied, his lust became more greedy and more lawless as he pampered it!

David's society winked at polygamy and some have said God did also. However, look at what Jesus had to say in Matthew 19:8: "Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away

your wives: but from the beginning it was not so."

God never winks at His own commandments. He had commanded all the kings of Israel thusly, "Neither shall he multiply wives unto himself, that his heart turn not away" (Deuteronomy 17:17). When Samuel anointed Saul king, "Samuel communed with Saul upon the top of the house" (1 Samuel 9:25). I'm sure he also sat down with David for long hours, showing him all God had commanded of kings. "He shall not multiply horses to himself (from Egypt)... neither shall he multiply wives to himself, neither.... silver and gold" (Deuteronomy 17:16-17).

David disobeyed the Word of God and became blind to what was happening to him. Had Zadok or Nathan gone to David to correct him, reminding him of what God had said, David would have probably answered like most of us: "Well, yes, it's there. God did say it's wrong. I love God; I love His Word, but God seems to have put His seal of approval on it. I just don't think God is that strict. Everybody is doing it, even some of the priests."

Satan's setup was designed to appeal to David's weakness - his attraction to beautiful women. Satan knew what was in David's heart. David had a gentle personality and a warm heart for God. But he also had a hidden lust burning deep in his soul.

You can almost hear the demonic planners scheming David's setup. "Look, he has a weak spot. There is a lust for women in him... he is always looking beyond what he has. Let's catch him in a weak moment, lure him out onto his royal roof, and put a beautiful bathing woman in the next courtyard to tantalize him. Make sure the woman is married; because if she is single, she'll just be another wife in David's harem."

What timing was involved! How intricate the setup! They both had to be in their places at the right moment and she had to be doing something to tantalize his lust.

David was two-faced about God's Word. You hear him talk about his great love and reverence for the Word but Nathan said, "Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord to do evil in His sight?" (2 Samuel 12:9).

Listen to what David said about God's Word: "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgements" (Psalm 119:105-106). I am certain David loved the Word except when it did not line up with what his heart wanted. He did not highly esteem it; he scorned it, turning aside from its powerful claim on him.

Satan knew David would rationalise, justify, and excuse his actions. He also knew David hated sin in others but couldn't see it in himself. When Nathan told him of a rich man who would not take a lamb out of his vast flock but stole a neighbour's only lamb, David called for the full judgement: "He shall surely die!" Yet he had excused his one sin.

I am the same man! I have a tendency to see clearly the sins of others and be so blind and excusing of my own. Last week my wife Gwen was not feeling well. In her tiredness, she said something hurting. She shut her door and said something I took to be unneeded. I got red-faced and said loudly, "That's demonic! I rebuke the devil! I won't allow that in my house. I'm the priest here and I have the authority to bind it!" I left for the office and on the elevator the Spirit spoke to me, "David, why is it that when she loses her temper it's the demonic; but when you do, it's called righteous indignation?"

How easily it is to ask, "How could they do such a thing?" But, if we would allow the Holy Ghost to expose all the hidden secrets in us, all the inbred lusts, and all the impure motives, we would all be on our faces crying out, "Lord, I am the man. I am the woman. It's me in need of mercy!"

David's fall was not his lust on the rooftop that one night. No! David walked into Satan's trap, unprepared, with a growing greed for something attractive. "More wives" was David's weakness so another wife (married woman) was the bait.

So many Christian husbands and wives are not satisfied with their mates because they are not "spiritual enough!" They long for spiritual union, spiritual oneness. It can be a most subtle trap!

One pastor confided to me: "It was a very spiritual woman who got to me! My wife and I were in two different worlds. She didn't understand the deep things of God. She was all wrapped up in her little world. This other woman in the church was so on fire, so interested in what the Lord was doing in me. We'd talk for hours only about the Lord. The Christ in each other attracted us, we thought; but it led to horrible adultery. We fell as low as any two could fall."

David would have rejected your observation outright if you had told him, "Sir you are two-faced about God's Word and you have a history of weakness for more wives. You are rich, increased with goods and in need of nothing. But you don't know that you are wretched, poor and blind to your real spiritual condition. You are walking into a set-up! You are putting your neck in the devil's noose!"

God reads your mind and thoughts, but the devil reads your actions. You will never see yourself as God does and as Satan does until the Word of God is your only guide. You will never deal with what you see until you allow the Holy Ghost to apply the Word as a rod to your soul and a bright light in every corner of your life.

As I was reading the story of David's cover-up and attempt to bribe Uriah, the knife of the Holy Spirit struck my soul. I saw some areas of my life that are just as bad! I saw little things that have the same seed of evil in them!

III. We Grow Weary of the Warfare. David had become weary of battle. "And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when Kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel... but David tarried still at Jerusalem" (2 Samuel 11:1).

Yet, the day was coming when David would not be permitted to fight. Years later, in another war with the Philistines, "David waxed faint..." A giant was posed, ready to kill David, when Abishai rescued him. "Then the men of David swore unto him, saying, Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle that thou quench not the light of Israel!" (2 Samuel 21:15-17).

But David was not old or faint of strength. He was just tired of it all. David stood before his warrior Joab and all the armies gathered out of Israel, encouraging them to "go on, be strong, fight like good soldiers." David was going to relax, let up a bit, and have some recreation.

I wonder what David said to himself as he saluted his passing troops? Was he feeling guilty? "I'm not going on a guilt trip. I'm not going to do anything wrong. I'm just going to have a little relaxation! The intensity is really getting to me and I just can't go on like this."

This is exactly where many Christians are in the spiritual realm: weary of spiritual warfare, weary of

correction, and weary of the straight and narrow way. I am not talking about the human realm. There is nothing wrong with taking time off for vacations, boating, swimming, golfing, etc. I am talking about letting down the spiritual guard when we grow tired of walking in obedience and tired of waging spiritual war.

Some of you reading this have taken a vacation from the warfare. You are weary of heart and have said to yourself, "I've got to ease up or crack up! I'm not going to love the Lord any less and I'll stay faithful. But for a while I have to do what I have to do. I must follow my heart and my heart says, Relax."

Beloved, your timing could not be worse! Spiritual relaxation or letting up is the final spring in the devil's trap. You are choosing midnight to go on vacation. "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Romans 13: 11-14).

If the night were far spent and the day of the Lord near when this was written, then how much nearer must it be now! There can be no relaxing in this last warfare. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour... whom resist steadfast in the faith"(1 Peter 5:8-9). Satan will not relax; he will increase his efforts. We dare not sleep! Nip the first sign of temptation in the bud. See the destroying hand of the devil behind it all. Paul admonished Timothy to "stir up the gift of God, which is in thee" (2 Timothy 1:6).

All through the New Testament, God is calling us to awake, to be vigilant and aware, and to put on the whole armour. We are not to sleep as do others, but be quickened, ever ready, and always looking for and hastening to the day of the Lord.

Relax in this war, and you are dead. Relax, and you are going to be hung in the devil's trap. That call to relax is right out of hell! It is the siren call of Satan himself. Be warned because it's high time to awake! David relaxed right into the arms of Bathsheba!

We Are Promised Escape Through Prayer And Trust in God."Keep me from the snares which they have laid for me, and the traps of the workers of iniquity... let the wicked fall into their own nets... while I escape" (Psalm 141:9-10).