

January 15

Perils for Preachers

Reading: Acts 18:24-28

*"Don't go to war without wise guidance;
victory depends on having many counsellors" (Prov 24:6)*

The strategy of Satan is always, "Strike the Shepherd; the sheep will be scattered!" Those who are called to preach God's Word and lead God's people must be extra-careful because they are constantly targeted by the devil. Here is some counsel to escape the enemy's traps.

● *Listen patiently to counsellors and critics.*

"Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety" (Prov 11:14). When we reach certain level of popularity, more and more worldly people will surround us, and the simple but godly friends will go unnoticed. The book of Psalms begins with a warning: "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly." Criticisms will not appear pleasant to us, but if we prayerfully and patiently consider them we will be greatly benefitted. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful" (Prov 27:6). Herbert Vander Lugt says, "When someone criticizes you, resist the impulse to find an excuse for your actions. Listen gratefully, and do what is right."

● *Build secondline leadership.*

In the Old Testament the leadership was mostly singular. But there is a definite shift to the plurality of leadership in the New Testament. The words "bishop" and "pastor" and "elder" refer to one and the same office and these ministers are always mentioned in the plural throughout the New Testament (Acts 14:23; 20:17; Phil 1:1; 1 Thess 5:12; Tit 1:5; Heb 13:7,17, 24; Js 5:14). A leader should be delivered from the lust of keeping the absolute control of the ministry on himself. We have only one head and that is Christ. All others including the leaders are only the organs of the Body. We must share the responsibility with and delegate authority to men on whom we find the necessary grace. Leaders must voluntarily retire to give opportunity to the nextliners and stand behind the young leaders to support and counsel.

● *Examine your life and ministry periodically.*

Setting aside one day every month and a couple of days twice or thrice a year for self-examination and evaluation is a healthy and helpful practice. The hymn-writer sang, "Take time to be holy." Jesus said, "Come apart." David prayed, "Search me, O God, and know my heart" (Psa 139:23,24). A sudden disaster will awaken us to realize the neglect of periodic overhauling. Open and transparent fellowship with reliable and mature leaders is a must for any preacher. Don't be a loner.
