

Simulation - Exaggeration - Predomination

by T. Austin-Sparks

Satan's downfall is revealed through his methods of simulation, exaggeration, and predomination, which are also used to deceive and lead people astray.

Scripture: Proverbs 16:32

Topics: "Church Leadership", "Self Control"

Description

Steven Cole emphasizes the importance of self-control in church leadership, highlighting the need for leaders to exercise restraint over their impulses, emotions, and desires. He warns against the damage caused by unqualified leaders in the church and stresses the necessity of spiritually mature individuals in leadership roles. The self-controlled individual is one who masters their emotions and desires, allowing Christ to be in control. This virtue is essential for overseers to lead effectively and glorify God.

Transcript

Bible interpreters have been convinced that the words ostensibly addressed to "the king of Babylon" in Isaiah 14 have a larger context and can only be exhausted if seen to refer to some erstwhile angelic being. This conviction is strongly supported by other statements and allusions in different parts of the Bible, such as Jude 6, II Peter 2:4, Luke 10:18.

If this is true, then the above makes clear the three steps leading to Satan's downfall. They also indicate the downfall of much more which has had a good beginning. There is much solemn and valuable teaching here, although the subject is not pleasant.

1. SIMULATION

"I will be like the Most High"

(Isaiah 14:14)

There is much in the Scriptures which shows that one of Satan's master methods is the imitation of God, and the imitation of God's truth. So much so is this that tremendous emphasis and importance are placed upon spiritual discernment as a gift and as a mark of the anointing. Indeed, it is a characteristic of "he that is spiritual" - the spiritual man. We can say that a primary work and function of the Holy Spirit is discernment. The Holy Spirit is spoken of or represented as having "seven eyes," which means the perfection of spiritual vision. We can here introduce another paragraph of much weight from Dr. Tozer:

"COULD THIS BE OUR MOST CRITICAL NEED?"

"When viewing the religious scene today we are tempted to fix on one or another weakness and say, "This is what is wrong with the Church. If this were corrected we could recapture the glory of the Early Church and have Pentecostal times back with us again."

"This tendency to oversimplification is itself a weakness and should be guarded against always.... For this reason I am hesitant to point to any one defect in present-day Christianity and make all our troubles stem from it alone. That so-called Bible religion in our times is suffering rapid decline is so evident as to need no proof; but just what has brought about this decline is not so easy to discover. I can only say that I have observed one significant lack among evangelical Christians which might turn out to be the real cause of most of our spiritual troubles; and, of course, if that were true, then the supplying of that lack would be our most critical need.

"The great deficiency to which I refer is the lack of spiritual discernment, especially among our leaders. How there can be so much Bible knowledge and so little insight, so little moral penetration, is one of the enigmas of the religious world today. I think it is altogether accurate to say that there has never been a time in the history of the Church when so many persons were engaged in Bible Study as are so engaged today. If the knowledge of Bible doctrine were any guarantee of godliness, this would without doubt be known in history as the age of sanctity. Instead, it may well be known as the age of the Church's Babylonish captivity, or the age of worldliness when the professed Bride of Christ allowed herself to be successfully courted by the fallen sons of men in unbelievable numbers. The body of evangelical believers, under evil influences, has during the last twenty-five years gone over to the world in complete and abject surrender, avoiding only a few of the grosser sins such as drunkenness and sexual promiscuity.

"That this disgraceful betrayal has taken place in broad daylight with full consent of our Bible teachers and evangelists is one of the most terrible affairs in the spiritual history of the world. Yet I for one cannot believe that the great surrender was negotiated by men of evil heart who set out to deliberately destroy the faith of our fathers. Many good and clean-living persons have collaborated with the quislings who betrayed us. Why? The answer can only be, from lack of spiritual vision. Something like a mist has settled over the Church as 'the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations' (Isaiah 25:7). Such a veil once descended upon Israel.... That was Israel's tragic hour. God raised up the Church and temporarily disfranchised His ancient people. He could not trust His work to blind men. Surely we need a baptism of clear seeing if we are to escape the fate of Israel... surely one of the greatest needs is for the appearance of Christian leaders with prophetic vision. We desperately need seers who can see through the mist. Unless they come soon it will be too late for this generation. And if they do come we will no doubt crucify a few of them in the name of our worldly orthodoxy. But the Cross is always the harbinger of the resurrection. Mere evangelism is not our present need. Evangelism does no more than extend religion, of whatever kind it may be. It gains acceptance for religion among larger numbers of people without giving much thought to the quality of that religion. The tragedy is that present-day evangelism accepts the degenerate form of Christianity now current as the very religion of the apostles and busies itself with making converts to it with no questions asked. And all the time we are moving farther and farther from the New Testament pattern. We must have a new reformation. There must come a violent break with the irresponsible, amusement-mad paganized pseudo-religion which passes today for the faith of Christ and which is being spread all over the world by unspiritual men employing unscriptural methods to achieve their ends." - Dr. A. W. Tozer.

There are various things in the New Testament which were intended for a witness to Christ; for building up of the Body of Christ; for the glory of Christ, which - for those very reasons - have been taken hold of by Satan and simulated, imitated, and given a resemblance to the true, but have been made - in the end - to discredit Christ, and do just the opposite to their Divine intention. It looks so much like the true that many dear people of God are deceived, perplexed, and led into error. Mixture of error with truth has always been a very successful method of seduction, even from the beginning. God is imitated in idolatry, false worship. Christ is imitated in anti-Christ. The Holy Spirit is imitated in guidance and gifts. Man is deceived by the psychic simulating the spiritual. People, under the stress of pressures of run-down nervous batteries, neuroses, overstrain, spiritual accusations and condemnations, rush to the psychiatrist. The method is to get them to relieve themselves of their tensions by self-expression, divulging hidden things, and in extreme cases by hypnotism. This has a psychological effect and the patient feels 'wonderfully relieved.' Expression; expression! Self-expression! One man told the writer that he came away from the psychiatrist feeling that he had been "born again," something even better than his conversion! But - yes, but! - it all came back again, and worse than the former.

Psychology - the science of the psyche - can be Satan's masterpiece in simulating the spiritual, and then plunging the soul into deeper depths of despair.

While there is a releasing of the spirit in prayer and song, and sometimes release can only be experienced in such ways, and fellowship is a great means of such blessing, there is the counterfeit of noisy and soulful chorus-singing and unbalanced repetition. Music is often the greatest blessing and the greatest peril. "In the Spirit" is the Divine dictum.

2. EXAGGERATION

"I will ascend above the heights of the clouds"

This whole paragraph - Isaiah 14:9-15 - is an exaggeration, if by exaggeration is meant 'to heap up, to load beyond normal, to carry to excess,' etc.

"I will ascend above..." holds this meaning - 'I will exceed'. It is ambition run amok. It is pride in full tide. It is something unrestrained by modesty, humility and dependence. It is extravagance. It is just adding to what is right and true. It is overstepping the mark. It is inflation. This is the peril of the passionate soul. If Satan cannot keep back he will push over. If he finds earnest devotion he will urge it to excess. If he finds an active mind he will cause it to add that extra to the truth, so that the truth becomes untrue.

In "the king of Babylon" we have the exaggeration of personality. "See this great Babylon which I have made." The "I," the ego, is assertive, pronounced, overmastering. Leadership and natural ability and gift become autocracy, dictatorship, even tyrannical. There is often a thin line between autocracy and spiritual leadership, and it is here that discernment is needed. The former forces, compels and makes legal. The latter comes of suffering, deep history with God, and sets a high standard, and keeps to it. This may be difficult for the flesh in others to accept, and they may wrongly interpret it. Leadership is a Divine gift and of great importance. No one will get far without it. Hence Satan has always marked down this function and its possessors for special attention to exaggerate it and defeat its true object. Dependence is the refuge of the spiritual leader, and the Lord very fully sees to this!

There are many exaggerated movements in our time. Teaching is pushed just that much beyond its true meaning. Something right and good, and then the bit in excess. It is thought to be very spiritual, advanced

teaching, but the line of actual meaning has been crossed, and confusion follows because of an unbalanced emphasis. This has so often been the cause of exotic and eccentric sects and groups, and their number is legion. The Athenian propensity was "some new thing," which usually means some new sensation. How powerfully Satan supports such exaggerations and makes error grow without proportion! He knows full well that he is going in this way to fill the world with disillusioned people who presently will not believe anything, particularly the truth. It was this very thing which made the Apostle John so strongly, almost vehemently, pinpoint the truth in his constantly repeated: "This is...." See his letters, and note his emphasis upon "the anointing teaching all things." The context is anti-Christ in deception.

3. PREDOMINATION

"I will exalt my throne above..."

"Exalt." "Above." The object, the goal, the climax of Satan's aspiration. It sounds fantastic and remote. But it is not so remote and unthinkable as it seems at first sight. Is not this the motif and stimulus of all power politics? If only we realized it, the undercutting of this was the reason for the Incarnation, because all sin has sprung from this root. The birth, the childhood, the manhood, the teaching, and the Cross of Jesus Christ were a positive offset to worldly power and glory. Never did He seek to 'make an impression,' draw to Himself or to His cause by prestige, elaborateness, glamour, or a show of natural glory.

Even of His rightful heavenly glory and status "He emptied Himself" His Kingdom and His Kingship were not of this world.

All this was to undo something which had been distorted. This something is in us all. We worship the idol of success. We have a totally false conception of strength, power, and importance. Jesus came to correct this in His own person. "Thou madest Him to [in order to] have dominion." Yes, but not self-centered. "Bringing many sons to glory." Yes, but the glory of His infinite grace, favour without any merit! "We shall reign with Him." Yes, but as worshippers of the Lamb!

The test of everything is whether it really exalts Christ. Not in word only. That may be a form of simulation and exaggeration. The demon-possessed temple girl of Phillippi may sponsor and preach the Gospel, but it is a "deep thing of Satan," and the Apostle was not selling the Gospel cheaply to the devil to gain popularity. The holiness of Christ is the criterion!

So we - all so briefly - note the way of Satan's course, but the way of his fall. The judgment upon his simulation, exaggeration, and predomination is "Thou shalt be brought down to hell."

Over against the false may the Lord produce the true similitude of Christ: the true magnifying of Christ: the true exaltation and supremacy of Christ!

From "A Witness And A Testimony" January-February, 1970; pp. 15-18

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/t-austin-sparks/simulation-exaggeration-predomination/>

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