

Your Five Greatest Dangers

Air Dates: August 8-12, 2022

Day One

I want to tell you what I believe are the five greatest dangers you and I face in our walk as believers.

Self-Sufficiency

If you buy into the common belief that you are all you need, you are in great danger. Yet, that is considered a very worthy and admirable attitude by many people.

I well remember a conversation I had with a very successful businesswoman who had climbed the career ladder very fast and very high and earned lots of money and recognition. She said to me, "I don't need anyone but myself. I don't depend on anyone but myself. I have learned that you have to take care of number one and not rely on others."

Even though she doesn't recognize it, she is in great danger because the facts are, she is not self-sufficient, regardless of her track record or accomplishments. You see, we may be able to get by with our self-sufficient attitude for some time and we may fool ourselves into believing it is true. But there will always come a time when you face the reality that you are not sufficient.

Death certainly is one checkpoint that shows up the fallacy of self-sufficiency. The Bible says "Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment..." (Hebrews 9:27). This is one place for sure where we have to admit our inability to help ourselves, and instead place our trust totally in the Lord Jesus Christ. His death, burial and resurrection assure us that, through faith in him, we can face death knowing that beyond the grave is an eternity with God. But you can't do that on your own. No one is self-sufficient when it comes to dying. We are dependent on God.

The Apostle Paul had to learn that he was not self-sufficient, even though he was well educated, had the right credentials and was totally devoted to serving Christ. He faced a disability that showed him how insufficient he was. But he learned the great truth that God's grace was sufficient for him, for God's power is made perfect in weakness. If you want God's power to be made perfect in your life, admit your weakness, confess that you are not self-sufficient, and know the wonderful freedom of operating in God's grace, which will be totally sufficient for you.

Day Two

What are the greatest spiritual dangers you face? I'm pointing out what I believe are our five greatest dangers. Here's danger number two:

Self-Deception

My pastor once said that the problem with deception is we don't know we're being deceived. Now you may think that is self-evident, but most of us don't really think about the fact that if we are deceived, we don't know it. For if, indeed, we knew we were deceived, we would no longer be deceived. Knowledge of the truth drives out deception.

Many people are self-deceived because they want to be. They don't want to face the music and see things as they really are, so they purposely remain in deception. For some, the refusal to know the truth is their way of trying to avoid the pain that could bring. For example, I may choose to be deceived about my inability to get along with people and tell myself that it's not my fault, because I don't want to face the fact that I have a problem. So, I deceive myself in order to avoid the pain of admitting I have a problem.

Of course, as long as I choose to be self-deceived, the problem gets worse not better. Only truth will set me free from such a problem, but I have to face that truth and then respond appropriately.

Others are self-deceived because they don't know the truth that will prevent the deception. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "Let no one deceive you with empty words." How do you know when you're hearing the truth or something deceptive? You measure it by the truth standard, the Word of God. That means you have to know the Bible well or you can be easily deceived by the empty and false words of all kinds of people.

Any time we live in deception, we are in great danger. I may be deceived into thinking there is water in an empty swimming pool, but upon diving in, neither the sincerity of my belief nor the innocence of my motives will prevent me from being killed by diving into an empty swimming pool. What dangers do you face today because you are deceived? Are you indulging in some self-deceptions? I encourage you to pray daily that God will reveal any deceptions in your life and show you the truth that will set you free from self-deceptions.

Day Three

Here's a third danger that believers face in their walk with Christ.

Self-Esteem

That sounds very strange, doesn't it? How could self-esteem be a danger? After all, everywhere we turn we hear that we have to have good self-esteem and feel good about ourselves in order to have a good life.

Well, there are two key problems with our search for self-esteem:

1. We're looking for the wrong thing.
2. We're looking in the wrong place.

Self-esteem—feeling good about yourself—is a biblical oxymoron, a self-contradiction. The Bible tells us that our own natural selves are sin-infested and capable of nothing good. We learn that even the best things we can do look like filthy rags to God. So, feeling good about something that is inherently sinful and selfish is looking for the wrong thing.

For ten long years I searched for self-esteem and tried so hard to feel good about myself. I thought a successful career would do it, but I achieved that and found it empty. I thought the right relationship with a man would give me those good feelings, but relationships came and went, and none of them brought me the fulfillment I wanted. I bought homes and clothes and accumulated things and recognition, but the more I piled on what was supposed to bring me good self-esteem, the emptier I became.

If you're looking for self-esteem today, you're in the same danger I was in. It's a dead-end road taking you nowhere but to emptiness and disappointment. Let me encourage you to abort that fruitless search and instead, set your heart to know God. Jeremiah wrote: "Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let the one who boasts boast about

this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,' declares the Lord" (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

Set out to know and understand God. The more you do, the better you will feel about yourself. I promise you—it's true. Good self-esteem comes as a by-product of knowing God better and better and appreciating who you are in God's eyes.

Day Four

Have you ever thought about the spiritual dangers you face? I'm listing what I see as our five greatest dangers. Number one was self-sufficiency, two was self-deception, and three was self-esteem. Number four is:

Self-Confidence

It seems to be a universally accepted belief that we all should have self-confidence. But Paul wrote to the Philippians that we who are believers, who glory in Christ Jesus, should put no confidence in the flesh. He went on to list all the reasons he could put confidence in himself: he was from the right family, had the best education, had demonstrated great zeal and abided by the laws flawlessly.

But he said, *"I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith"* (Philippians 3:8-9).

Why is self-confidence a great spiritual danger? Because it erodes our faith and trust in Christ alone. Any time we start thinking that we can do something on our own or feeling as though we've achieved some position by our own efforts; any time we are confident about ourselves or our abilities, we are in a dangerous spot. That's when we think we are standing firm, but instead we are most likely to fall.

I've noticed over the years that when a big event is coming up, a speaking engagement, a retreat, or whatever, usually the week before God has a way of reminding me that if I think I can do this on my own, I'd better think again. I'll do something really stupid, or forget some detail, or get angry at someone and say something I shouldn't—something like that. And I've decided it's God's way of whispering in my ear, "Don't let your self-confidence become your Achilles heel; place no confidence in yourself. Remember, I use weak and foolish things of this world."

Self-confidence is a great danger, but God-confidence is powerful. I'm confident he loves me and always will. I'm confident I can go to his throne with boldness at any time and he hears me. I'm confident that because of Jesus I have eternal life with God. And I'm confident I can do all that God wants me to do through Christ who gives me strength. That's not self-confidence; that's God-confidence.

Day Five

What are the five greatest spiritual dangers we face? I've offered what I see as the answer to this question. First, there's the danger of self-sufficiency, then self-deception, self-esteem, and self-confidence. And today we finish with number five,

Self-Satisfied

I'm sure you've noticed the common theme in all these dangers: self. We are our own greatest dangers in many different ways. And here's one that is very subtle but very dangerous: being satisfied with yourself.

Are you satisfied with where you are in your walk with God? If so, you're not likely to grow very much. We need a holy dissatisfaction with where we are so that we will seek and find all that God has for us.

The Psalmist wrote: "*As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God*" (Psalm 42:1-2a). Those are beautiful words that we quote and sing, but do we actually ever pant for God like a thirsty deer?

Now, this doesn't mean that we live in a state of frustration or lack of peace. No, as A. W. Tozer writes: "O God, I have tasted Thy goodness, and it has both satisfied me and made me thirsty for more. . . I long to be filled with longing; I thirst to be made more thirsty still."

If your walk with God is at a stalemate and you've been satisfied to just get by, I want to tell you you're in great danger of missing so many good things, because, dear friends, the sweetest blessings, the greatest joys are found as we get to know God better and better and pursue him as our highest ambition and greatest achievement.

So, if you're in that self-satisfied, mediocre, neither-hot-nor-cold stage, pray that God will stir up in you a hunger and thirst for righteousness so that you are not satisfied with where you are spiritually and you push on to discover all that God has for you and wants to do through you before your life is over.

I hope you'll remember these five great dangers: Self-sufficiency, self-deception, self-esteem, self-confidence and self-satisfaction.