

FAILING OF THE GRACE OF GOD

There are people in the Scriptures who were aiming for heaven but did not make it. Each one could have had a glorious finish, had they only remained on the pathway of righteousness. But each failed of the grace of God, and are solemn lessons for us as we contemplate their lives and choices.

Ahithophel (The Danger of Being Offended)

Ahithophel was a counselor and a close confidante to King David. This man was so mighty that it is written of him, *“And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he gave in those days, was as if one had inquired at the oracle of God. So was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom,”* (2 Sam.16:23).

As we know, David committed adultery with Bathsheba, who was the granddaughter of Ahithophel. God had told King David that one of the fearsome judgments that was going to come upon him was that his own son would rise up against him. That son was Absalom. We have to remember that although there is forgiveness for sin, there is also judgment.

At the time of Absalom’s rebellion he gathered the people together and sent word to Ahithophel. Why was Absalom so sure that this mighty counselor of King David would listen? It was because Ahithophel had not forgiven David for what he did to his granddaughter. The heart of Ahithophel was harboring that offence; therefore the invitation of Absalom came to a heart which was prepared to receive it. Yet the counsel of Ahithophel continued to flow, since the giftings and callings of God are without repentance (Rom.11:29). This means that they continue even though the vessel may have left the pathway of God.

When David was fleeing from Absalom he had prayed, *“O Lord, I pray, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness,”* (2 Sam.15:31). Absalom ended up rejecting Ahithophel’s counsel for war to instead accept other advice. Through this tremendous error of judgment Absalom's rebellion failed.

Ahithophel knew that the moment his counsel had been rejected, it was all over for him – he was on the losing side. He saddled his donkey, put his house in order, and committed suicide (2 Sam.17:23). Do not forget, this man was one of the greatest counselors in the Word of God. He should have been set for heaven at the side of King David. Today, he is in hell.

The lesson of Ahithophel shows us that our ministry will not save us, but it is the condition of our heart, void of offence, that will. The psalmist says, *“Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them”* (Ps. 119:165). Therefore we should guard our hearts with all diligence (Proverbs 4:23), and ensure that we are clinging to the Word of God at all times. In this way our hearts will be secure from all offences that could turn us from the pathway of God.

The Immoral Person (The Dangers of Willfully Sinning)

In Proverbs 2:16 we are introduced to the immoral woman: *“To deliver you from the immoral woman, from the seductress who flatters with her words.”* The warnings in the preceding verses are to listen to the Lord and to wisdom so that we might be delivered from the immoral woman with her flattery.

Who is this immoral woman? We read in Proverbs 2:17: *“Who forsakes the guide of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God.”* In other words, this girl was brought up in the church. She left the guide of her youth. She turned away and forgot the covenant of her God. This girl was brought up in Sunday school. She was born-again, perhaps even water baptized, and she was going on in God. She had been watched over by her teachers, but then she made wrong choices for herself, choosing to forsake the right way. Proverbs 2:18-19 says, *“For her house leads down to death, and her paths to the dead. None who go to her return, nor do they regain the paths of life.”* These verses should put the fear of the Lord in our hearts, for remember that she once walked with the godly. But now her footsteps are leading her to hell along with those who follow her.

We read of the immoral man in Proverbs 5:12-14: *“...How I have hated instruction, and my heart despised correction! I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to those who instructed me! I was on the verge of total ruin in the midst of the assembly and congregation.”*

One time I had a man in my office, someone who had been beaten for the cause of Christ in another country. He had experienced salvation and the blessing of God, but afterwards backslid. I told him, “You are wicked and have left God.” He admitted, “I have left God, and I have left the church.” I said, “Then you are going to hell.” He said, “That is what Scripture says.” I gave him the opportunity to make a decision to abandon his wicked ways and make a step toward righteousness. However, he refused.

I recounted to this man what took place in an orphanage in Guatemala. There were two boys that had grown up together from a very young age. When they were 17 years old, one of them insisted that he wanted to leave the orphanage. The other one implored him not to, but he insisted that he wanted money and the pleasures of the world. The director of the orphanage also pleaded with him, but the boy chose to leave.

One quick way of making money is to get involved with selling drugs. Very soon, this orphan boy entered the drug scene, which is one of violence. However, this orphan boy was in that scene only a short time before he crossed the path of someone who was more powerful than he was. He was shot dead.

A few months later, the Spirit of God was moving in a wonderful way in that orphanage, and people were having visions of heaven and hell. The boy who was the friend of the one who had been shot had this experience: An angel took him up to heaven and showed him some of the glories of heaven and then said, “I am commissioned by God to take you down and show you

things in hell.” This specific trip involved a certain section in hell where there were cells with people being tormented.

The angel took this young man to a particular cell where he heard awful screams. There he saw a demon, with a whip having iron or steel coming from it, beating a young man. In hell, one loses all sense of resistance; so this tormented fellow had to keep his head down and his back bared. He just kept screaming as the demon beat him. There was no end to his torment. The tormented fellow turned his head, and the young man with the angel standing beside him saw that it was his friend who had been with him in the orphanage.

After I finished sharing this account with this backslidden man in my office, I asked him, “Have you any idea what it is like to be beaten without mercy? When one demon gets tired, the fellow has no rest, for another demon takes over. Demons just rejoice in torture.” I told him, “That is going to be your eternity, if not an even greater judgment because of your wickedness.” He only replied, “I guess so. I guess so.” He had crossed the line. There was no repentance.

On your way to heaven, make sure that nothing turns you away. The Lord said, “*He that endures to the end will be saved*” (Mt. 10:22). Do not let the world, family ties, or any temptation or offense turn you aside.

Eternity is eternity; there is absolutely no end. Ecclesiastes 11:3 says, “*...in the place where the tree falls, there it shall lie.*” The condition we are in when we die will be the condition we remain in forever. To have begun well and then to turn aside is terrible. We want to say, “Lord, keep me true!”

One might be great and have many wonderful giftings like Ahithophel, a counselor of kings. Yet anyone can fail because of a lack of wholehearted dedication to God. The reason was that they did not cling wholeheartedly to the Lord and His Word in the time of their testing. If only they had contemplated that life is like a race, and the all-important factor is to finish well.