**SIGNPOSTS TO A DECLINING MINISTRY II**

Solomon started ministry with unparalleled wisdom that was noised abroad and could not be disputed. However his disobedience to God’s word – multiplying wives, chasing concubines, involvement with idolatry, indulgence etc. -- turned his wisdom upside down. With time he and his wisdom became irrelevant. The signposts to a declining ministry are clear if we care enough to notice.

**INDISCIPLINE IN GOD’S VINEYARD**

Ecclesiastes 10:18; Proverbs 26:13-15; 24:30-34; 12:27; 16:32; Philippians 4:8,9; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Indiscipline is like the little foxes that spoil the vine (Song of Solomon 2:15). Through indiscipline, great edifices that have been erected over time will decay and crumble quickly. Lack of discipline in maintaining our spiritual exercises – quiet time, prayer, Bible reading and study, personal witnessing, etc. – will cause our spiritual edifice to fall through (Ecclesiastes 10:18; Proverbs 26:13-15).

There is the need to keep our bodies under discipline, that is, being disciplined with our words, food, actions, eyes, etc. – being disciplined in what we say, eat, watch, think about, etc. (Philippians 4:8,9; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Proverbs 24:30-34; 12:27; 16:32),

**INDULGENCE AND GROWING VANITY**

Matthew 13:22; 1 John 2:15-17; James 4:4; 1 Corinthians 7:31; Matthew 10:38; 16:24; Mark 8:34; 10:21; Luke 9:23; 14:27; Hebrews 12:2

Many highly successful ministers were brought down through their indulgence and growing vanities. They faded into insignificance and were consigned to the dustbin of history.

Worldliness is the main reason for their demise. They become overly preoccupied with fashion and their appearance – jewelry, exotic hairdos, obsession with designer clothing, inordinate demands in food, accommodation, etc. (Matthew 13:22).

The fashion of this world that passes away becomes their preoccupation. They become overly meticulous about their clothing and appearance. They spend disproportionate amounts to build their exotic wardrobes of designer clothes. They want to be identified and compared with the stars of Hollywood – they want to look sexy and possibly become sex icons.

God’s warnings against worldliness is relevant for the church, but even more relevant for ministers of the gospel (1 John 2:15-17; James 4:4; 1 Corinthians 7:31).

When the centre of attention and focus of a minister is his/her physical dressing and not his/her spiritual adornment, there is cause for concern. When a minister or his wife can spend hours on their physical dressing but cannot spend time to obtain the presence of God, it is evidence of a declining ministry.

When a basic, comfortable hotel is no longer sufficient, when we demand to stay in a €2000/night hotel, things have taken a downturn.

Self-denial and sacrifice is still part of the Bible (Matthew 10:38; 16:24; Mark 8:34; 10:21; Luke 9:23; 14:27; Hebrews 12:2).

**INDOLENCE AND GRIEVOUS VACATION**

Ecclesiastes 9:10; Romans 12:11; Amos 6:1; Jeremiah 48:10; 2 Corinthians 4:1,2; 11:23; 1 Corinthians 15:10; Colossians 1:28

The heights we have reached through diligence can only be maintained or surpassed through further diligence. We cannot afford to rest on our oars. ***“If we rest, we rust”*** is the name of the game. If we rest on our crowns, we will crush those crowns.

Indeed, there is no discharge in this war (Ecclesiastes 8:8). We cannot afford to rest by the wayside like the young prophet (1 Kings 13:1-33).

***“Come ye yourselves and rest AWHILE”*** is still a valid injunction of the Scriptures (Mark 6:31). However life is not one continuous vacation. When we no longer expend effort in ministry but just coast along with passable effort, this is being at ease in Zion. This is epicurean indolence, a grievous vacation indeed and is tantamount to doing the work of the Lord deceitfully (Amos 6:1; Jeremiah 48:10; 2 Corinthians 4:1,2).

Despite the achievements of Paul the apostle, he laboured more than all and did so till his last breath. He laboured to present the people complete and perfect before God (1 Corinthians 15:10; 2 Corinthians 11:23; Colossians 1:28).

We are enjoined not to be slothful in business but fervent in the spirit as we serve the Lord (Romans 12:11).

**INIQUITY AND GRADUAL VILENESS**

Judges 16:1-28; 1 Kings 13:1-33; Jonah 1:1-4; Revelation 2:5,20-23; 2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Peter 2:11; Numbers 24:1; 2 Peter 2:15,16; Jeremiah 23:16,21,25,26,32.

When a minister cal tell lies like Samson and the old prophet and be very comfortable with lies without a prick in his conscience, this is evidence of ministerial decline (Judges 16:1-28; 1 Kings 13:1-33).

When a minister can begin to “prophesy” contrary to the divine commandment in order to gain the wages of unrighteousness like Balaam, it is evident of a declining ministry that will degenerate from anointed, divine prophecy into satanic enchantment (Jeremiah 23:16,21,25,26,32; Numbers 24:1; 2 Peter 2:15,16).

When a minister can run away in disobedience to a divine mandate like Jonah, except there is repentance, such a ministry is going to deteriorate (Jonah 1:1-4; Revelation 2:5).

Eating foods sacrificed to idols, enjoying a warm embrace with Jezebel, occasional kisses with the secretary in the office is proof of ministerial decline (Revelation 2:20-23).

***“Flee youthful lust”*** is a warning that young ministers must heed; old and mature ministers must beware of aged infatuation (2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Peter 2:11).

**Personal Notes**