Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Lessons to Learn from the Fall of Jimmy Swaggart
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 80-47

Hi, this is John MacArthur. It's my privilege each week to speak in chapel to the Master's College students and each week I try to speak on a subject that's relevant to their spiritual life and growth. This week I chose to speak to our students on the subject, What we learn from the fall of Jimmy Swaggart. We have lived to see the worst, at least the most far-reaching scandal of any minister in the history of the church. The impact is just monumental. And I felt that our students needed to understand the implications of this great, great sin. So I took the chapel time to speak and I wanted so much to share this with you beyond just the chapel walls. We were in the gymnasium packed in with about a thousand people and the sound might not as good as it could be in some other circumstances, but the message is very important. And because of its importance, we wanted to make it available to all who would be interested.

My prayer as you listen is that you will be able to discern and understand the important issues that have been brought to light in this great tragedy. And my prayer also is that it may call the church to a new kind of commitment, that it may call believers to a new kind of discernment. God bless you as you listen and apply these things to your life as I'm trusting our students did.

The emphasis of our chapel this morning has been to think about this matter of holiness and godliness. With that in mind, I want to speak this morning on the subject, what we learn from the fall of Jimmy Swaggart. You have lived, young people, to see what amounts to the most far-reaching scandal in the history of the Christian church. There has never occurred in Christianity anything of this proportion. This summer I will have occasion to be in Asia and many of the places where I will travel in Asia I will come across what reflects the extensive influence of Jimmy Swaggart. Coming out of the Manila Airport and heading for the city of Manila, you pass a large building, I'm told, that says, "Jimmy Swaggart Ministries." This thing has scandalized the world from one end to the other because of the power of media. It has become a tremendous reproach to the name of Jesus Christ, to His church, to all who preach the Word of God, bringing them under suspicion. It has far-greater implications than the PTL scandal with Jim Bakker and Tammy ever had because when Jim and Tammy Bakker were discovered to be sinners who were hypocritically pretending to be something they were not, the world said to itself, "Isn't that terrible that those people did that? I wonder if the rest are like that?" And when it was exposed that Jimmy Swaggart was involved in sexual perversion over a long, long period of time, most people in the world must have concluded, "Well, they are, aren't they?"

The far-reaching implications of this are just frightening in terms of the integrity, the credibility of the church, and of those who name the name of Christ. And I know myself that when I came to my church on Sunday and stood up before those people, some people sitting in that congregation were wondering in their mind whether or not I was really legitimate. I know that. And asking the question in their own minds whether they really wanted to or not consciously, "I wonder if MacArthur's got something going on the side." This is a profound blight on the history of the church. You happen to be alive in that time and this is the time to learn the lesson that this will teach us. So I want you to listen carefully as I try to share with you what we learn from the fall of Jimmy Swaggart. And I believe it's applicable to our own lives, as you shall see. And I'm going to give you a list of things you'll want to write down so you can think them through on your own.

Number one, we learn that false spiritual standards cannot restrain the flesh. False spiritual standards cannot restrain the flesh. In Galatians chapter 3 and verse 3 Paul said to the Christians at Galatia, "Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect in the flesh?" What did he mean by that? He meant that they were regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit but after their regeneration had opted out for a form of legalistic spirituality that dealt only with the externals and not with the heart. And what he said to them was, having begun in the Spirit, do you think you can continue by living in the flesh? And that was a false standard of spirituality. They were being told that if you keep the ceremonies of the temple and if you get circumcised and if you follow all of the rituals, traditions, and ceremonies that are tied in with historic Judaism, that will lead you to spirituality. And Paul is saying not so. That is not a true standard of spirituality. You don't begin in the Spirit and then invent some external kind of system to make you grow. Legalism is a frightening false spiritual standard. And I'm never surprised when I see someone involved in legalism fall to sin because legalism cannot restrain the flesh. It's a false standard. Neither can emotionalism. And there are a lot of people in the sphere of the Charismatic Movement where Jimmy Swaggart and the PTL folks are whose whole approach to spirituality is built around an emotional experience and emotion cannot restrain the flesh either. Emotion is a responder to the mind and to deep-seated convictions and attitudes and beliefs. And if the attitudes and beliefs and convictions aren't right, the emotions can't go right and you can't get to the belief system through the emotions, you have to go there through the mind.

So what you have in the Charismatic Movement is a standard of spirituality that says you want to feel the Holy Spirit, you want to feel God, you want to emote. There's a lot of tears and a lot of laughter and a lot of falling backwards and waving your hands and emoting and a lot of people seeking ecstatic experiences and wonders and signs and miracles...it's all on the outside and as deep as it goes it touches only their emotion and emotion cannot control the flesh because emotion is a responder to the mind. And if the flesh controls the mind, the emotions react to that. You watch those people, for example, singing certain kinds of songs that have a very lilting melody and they're

songs about Jesus and they're songs about God but many of them could well be songs about trees and songs about rivers and create the same emotion. And they are moving about and sometimes you see tears in their eyes and they sway back and forth and they really get into it and it is not an experience of true spirituality, for the most part, it's an experience of emotion and emotion cannot control the flesh. And what you see is a man whose standard for spirituality was not biblical and therefore he could not control his own flesh, his own life.

The flesh is controlled by the power of the Holy Spirit in perfect accord with a deep knowledge of the truth of God. Emotion follows that. And if you feed the flesh and if you build your spirituality on emotional experience and feelings and looking for ecstatic experience, it will crumble before you. One by one the leaders are collapsing because the superstructure inside is faulty and the standard of spirituality that they're trying to control their flesh with is illegitimate. And as a result, they can't sustain it. And you look at them and you watch them.

You take a person, for example, like Oral Roberts who comes off with bizarre kinds of things and he has just about passed off the scene as a Charismatic leader because of the strange and bizarre things that he claims to be experiencing. People are sort of pushing him aside as being almost irrational.

And then you watch the Bakkers who were with the next sort of high-profile Charismatic leaders and they've gone by the wayside due to immorality. And then goes Jimmy Swaggart the same way. And the bottom line is that these people are trying to live a godly life, trying to, I suppose, honor the Lord to some extent without the proper understanding of the root of true spirituality. They don't understand the ministry of the Holy Spirit. They don't understand the deep knowledge of the Word of God. They don't understand the commitment to obedience. They're looking for emotion and feeling and external experience.

Secondly, what we learn from the fall of Jimmy Swaggart is the danger of a shallow theology...the danger of a shallow theology in an emotional religion. Young people, true doctrine is the foundation of all proper behavior. True doctrine is the foundation of all proper behavior. That's why in the epistle to the Romans you have eleven chapters of doctrine, eleven chapters of theology and then you have in chapter 12, "Therefore present your bodies a living sacrifice." But you can't even begin to get on with the presentation of your body and godly living until the foundation of doctrine is laid. Somebody asked me months ago when the PTL scandal hit, what I thought was the worst part of that scandal. And my reply was, it was a terrible thing which they did with their bodies, engaging in sexual immorality, but that wasn't the major scandal. It was a terrible thing what they did with money, taking the money that people sent them and wasting it on their own riotous living and the things that entertained them. That was a scandal. But far beyond what they did with their bodies and far beyond what they did with their money, the scandal of all scandals is what they did with this book because they developed a theology that let them live that way. That's the scandal. And, young people, don't

ever minimize the position and the place of strong doctrine, it's what holds everything together. And without it everything is whimsical and emotional and you are led by whatever it is that you feel is right.

You look at emotional religion, you look at Charismatic theology, it's all emotion. Substance isn't there. They're concerned with tongues and miracles and healings. And that's enough for them. And I've watched, for example, people who are defrocked out of evangelicalism slide over into the Charismatic Movement and become instantly high profile. And they're fully accepted because the issue is not doctrine or character. If you've had the experience, you're one of them. That's how shallow it is. Wrongly dividing the Word of God does not lay a foundation for rightly doing the work of God. Did you get that? Wrongly dividing the Word of God does not lay a foundation for rightly doing the work of God. You never rise above your foundation.

And it is amazing to me that the people who in this movement are the highest profile, most verbal, most well-known and on the surface most successful and who are supposedly the spokesman for God, the ones who speak in tongues and heal people, the ones who have all this power, when you get behind the surface their lives are corrupt. And it doesn't take a Phi-Beta-Kappa to figure out that if God was going to pass out miraculous power, He wouldn't give it to perverted people. Why? Because God's miraculous power has always been to authenticate a true prophet and authenticate God's Word and authenticate God's spokesmen and God is not about to authenticate people who don't live up to His standard and don't speak His Word truthfully. And what you're seeing is the collapse of people who have presented themselves as if they were the unique spokesmen of God, but because there is an aberrant theology and a false spiritual standard, the superstructure is all wrong and all bad and the collapse is inevitable, it's only a question of time.

Last week this scandal of Jimmy Swaggart broke on Thursday, he knew about it last October. I tend to believe if repentance was genuine, he would have confessed in October not when the press found out last week.

Thirdly, we learn from this terrible scandal how important it is to uphold the true standard for spiritual leaders...how important it is to uphold the true standard for spiritual leaders. In 1 Timothy chapter 3 the Bible says that a person who is a spiritual leader is to be blameless, is to be above reproach, is to be a one-woman man. Did you get that? Blameless, above reproach, a one-woman man, 1 Timothy 3:1 and following, Titus 1:5 to 7. Do you know what happens when you don't hold a person to that standard? Eventually Christianity will be mocked and discredited.

There were some people who knew this. This became known last October. Instead of dealing with it the way it ought to have been dealt with and the church preserving its character and its integrity, they tried to hide it and then the world had to uncover it in a scandal. And the world the Lord used to do what the church refused to do. What a rebuke to the church. What a rebuke to the church. And then

when the church comes back and says, “Well, we’re going to make him not preach for three months.” And then the larger body says, “No, we think it ought to be a year.” What the church is saying, in effect, is...this is not that big of a deal. In fact, if your sin is perverted enough, you might get three months off. That sounds like a vacation.

Where did the true standard of spiritual leadership ever go? People say to me, “Well do you think Jimmy Swaggart could ever come back and preach again?” And my answer is absolutely unequivocably no, ever in his life. Why? He’s not blameless, he’s not above reproach, and he has proven he’s not a one-woman man. He is not. He is disqualified, plain and simple, for good, for permanent. In fact, if he were living in the Old Testament time he’d be dead, right? Because the Law of God required stoning for one who did what he did. The right thing to do would be to take him out of the pulpit instantaneously, he should never have been given the pulpit on the Sunday he was given the pulpit two weeks ago. He should have been taken out of that pulpit and never returned to it. That’s a sacred place that belongs to men who truly fulfill the qualifications of God by the grace of the Spirit.

You say, “What about restoration?” people say. It’s not an issue of restoration. If he truly is repentant and time will tell, because it’s hard, you know, when a man is a very clever speaker and when he’s been a hypocrite for so long to all of a sudden trust him in one week. And when you’ve seen him manipulate people year after year after year, you’re not sure he’s not manipulating you again. The Lord knows. But the issue is not restoration. He can be restored to God if his heart is right. But he’s always going to struggle if he doesn’t get his theology right. He can be restored to the fellowship of the church, but the pulpit and spiritual leadership? That’s a whole different issue. That is for those who are qualified as blameless, above reproach, one-woman men. That’s the issue. You have to...people say to me, “Well how soon should a leader be restored?” And my answer is, “Well that all depends on what a leader is. How you define a leader.” If leader is a guy who can get up in front and motivate people, then get him back. If a leader is a guy who can speak cleverly and glibly and emotionally and get people to respond, then get him back. If a leader is someone who can raise money, then get him back. If a leader is someone who can pull off the program and mobilize the forces to get the work done, then get him back. But if a spiritual leader is a model of virtue and a standard of spirituality and an example of godly character, then he never comes back, right? Never, because that’s shattered...shattered for good. It’s tragic but it’s true. And if the church doesn’t soon wake up to holding the standard for godly leadership, it’s going to undercut everything...everything.

A pastor came to me this week, you don’t even know him, very few people know him, small little church. He’s the other end of the world from Jimmy Swaggart. He came to talk to me because he too had been involved with a woman, disgraced himself and was put out of his church. And he said to me, “Do you think I can ever stand again and preach God’s Word?” I said, “I think you get one shot at that and if you violate the integrity of the ministry in a moral way and there’s a blight on your life

and you're not a one-woman man, you're done." He said, "But no one even knows who I am." And my answer to that was, "But God knows who you are. And if anyone knows that you have violated the standard of ministry and the church compromises on that, then the integrity of the church is in question."

And that leads me to a fourth thought that I just give you out of this whole thing. This teaches us, this terrible fall of Jimmy Swaggart, the fragile nature of spiritual credibility...the fragile nature of spiritual credibility. Young people, those of us who minister in the name of Jesus Christ hang by a very slim thread. Do you understand that? And those of you young people who are planning to give your life in service to Jesus Christ, you have a very thin thread and if the thread is snapped, it's well the end for you.

You say, "What do you mean?" First Corinthians chapter 9, Paul says, "Look, my greatest fear is that in preaching to others I myself might become disqualified." Remember that? First Corinthians 9:27..."In preaching to others, I myself might become disqualified." Spurgeon said that if a man has a great moral blight in his life, there's every reason to assume that he was never called to the ministry to begin with. Don't force that issue. You have one shot at credibility, one shot.

And I'll tell you something. If we apply the biblical standard to the church across the board, it would shake up the church dramatically. But you see what happens when a man of God loses his credibility, what do you think the people who sit under him think about what he says? Let me tell you something. Jimmy Swaggart may try to come back, but I know enough about human nature even without reading Maslov's(?) Theories of Psychologyto know this, that in a great trauma, the first reaction is disbelief, the second reaction is sadness and sorrow, and the third reaction is anger, you have been violated, you have been taken for a ride. And believe me, I'm convinced if he tried to come back, he's going to face a lot of hostile, angry people whose emotions have moved from sadness to having the feeling they've been taken, cheated, ripped off. And the people who might want to line up behind him should he come back would be the people who want some justification for the kind of life they've been living, which is a lot like the kind he's been living. But true spiritual credibility is shattered. It's a fragile thing.

Fifthly, another lesson that we learn from this is the ugliness of hypocrisy...the ugliness of hypocrisy. Is there anything in the wide world as ugly as hypocrisy? Is there anything as gross as parading to represent God while you're perverted in your life style? Is there anything worse than lying and my judgment at the highest level, and God hates lying because God is truth? Is there any greater lie than to say and demand that all people live for God while you live for yourself and for Satan and the flesh? Ugliness of hypocrisy.

I always think of Matthew 23, you ought to read it, starting in verse 14 to the end of the chapter. The ugliness of hypocrisy. "You hypocrites," Jesus says to the Pharisees, "you hypocrites, you demand this and you demand that and you do this and you do that in front of the people and yet inside you are rotten, you're full of dead men's bones, you stink like a grave."

Paul describes the false teachers in 1 Timothy 4 as hypocritical liars. There's nothing in my mind as ugly as hypocrisy, on any level. Spiritual hypocrisy is the ugliest thing of all. See, it's not what a man says, it's what a man is. Jesus in Matthew 7 contrasted the "if we sayers" from the "if we doers." "Lord, Lord, haven't we done all this in Your name? I never knew you." It's not what a man says, it's what he is...the ugliness of hypocrisy...such a dishonor to Christ.

Number six, another thing we learn from this, and this, I think, is important, is the power of the gospel to go beyond the vehicle that proclaims it...the power of the gospel to go beyond the vehicle that proclaims it.

People say, "Well wait a minute. With all the sin in his life, all the years of whatever perversions he's been involved in, look at all the people who have heard the gospel. Look at all the people who have been saved." And I say to you, the gospel is so powerful that it will go way beyond the vehicle that carries it, but that doesn't justify the conduct of the vehicle, right? I mean, let's face it, God will use Balaam's ass if He wants to, talk through the mouth of a jackass if He has to. And God's Word never returns...what?...void. The power is in the Word. You understand that? Not the vehicle. And you can put the gospel in the mouth of the worst sinner and it is so powerful that it is still the living seed that can produce life because salvation, and mark this down somewhere in your mental file, salvation is never a result of the cleverness of the proclaimer, never. It's always a result of the power of the truth and the work of the Spirit. But still, we don't want to put it in the mouth of a phony because that desecrates it.

Do you remember in Acts 16? Most interesting incident. In the sixteenth chapter of Acts which you probably associate with the Philippian jailor, there's a little incident that occurs prior to that one. It says, "It came to pass as we went to prayer, a certain maid possessed with the spirit of divination met us and brought her master's much gain by soothsaying." Here was a medium and this woman medium was making a lot of money for the guys who were managing her career. And here comes this demon-possessed woman and she follows Paul and the people with him and she says, "These men are the servants of the Most High God who's shown to us the way of salvation." Was that true? Was that true? Was Paul a messenger of the Most High God who showed people the way of salvation? That's right. So here's a demon crying out of a woman the truth about Paul and the way of salvation. Now do we need demons to announce the truth? No, demons would like to think we need them because that would really confuse people.

Look what happened. “She did this for many days. Paul was so grieved he turned around and said to that spirit, ‘I command you in the name of Jesus Christ, come out of her.’ And he came out the same hour.” Why? Because the Christian ministry doesn’t need demon-possessed people articulating its truth. They are to be silenced. I’m not saying this man was demon possessed, I’m just saying we can understand the power of the gospel is greater than the vehicle, but that doesn’t justify using any vehicle.

Number seven, and these are not in any order of particular importance, they’re all important. Number seven, and this is such a tremendous lesson, what we learn from the fall of Jimmy Swaggart is this, the power of self-deception...the power of self-deception. Here is a man who preaches against sin week in and week out and isn’t even dealing with it in his own life. How could he do that? How could he believe he’s the instrument of God and how could he be preaching against sin? How could he be calling Jim Bakker a cancer on the body of Christ? You know, right now when this sin broke he was doing a series on adultery, the main feature of the series was a study of Rahab the harlot? How can you be preaching against adultery on a prostitute while you’re doing that with a prostitute? Self-deception...self-deception. Jeremiah said it in 17:9, “The heart is...what?...deceitful and desperately wicked.” And then he said, “Who can know it?” It’s incredibly self-deceptive...incredibly.

James 1:22 says, “Be not hearers of the Word only but doers, not deceiving your own selves.” Self-deception. Here was a very self-deceived man. The Psalmist, I think, really touches this right at its core. Do you remember Psalm 15 verses 1 and 2? Listen. Psalm 15:1, “Who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill?” In other words, God, who has a right to Your presence? Who has a right to Your fellowship? Who has a right to worship You? This, “He that walks uprightly,” we start with external behavior, “he that walks uprightly and works righteousness...now get this next one...and speaks the truth in his heart.” That’s it. It goes all the way to the inside, speaks the truth in his heart. Not just those who walk uprightly and do what is right on the outside, but those who have truthful hearts.

Young people, you can be self-deceived. You can be going along preaching against something you’re entertaining in your own heart. You can be condemning someone else for what you’re doing. And this self-deception is so powerful that this man actually got to the point where he probably never even saw it for what it was until it exploded across the world in his face...the power of self-deception. Don’t be self-deceived. Start with the heart. Don’t kid yourself because you do things on the outside that look good, all is well.

Number eight, another lesson to be learned from this is the danger of pride and ego fulfillment....the danger of pride and ego fulfillment. Paul described the Judaizers in Galatians 6:12 as wanting to make a show in the flesh, wanting to put on a show on the outside. If you’ve got any of that in you that wants to be up front and be the respected one and have the attention of everybody, if you’ve got

any of that in your, television can turn you into a monster. It can turn you into a monster. It can feed your ego at a pace that would blow it so far out of proportion that you will be self-deceived. Media feeds the monstrous sin of pride.

Ask yourself when you look at television, next time you see people how many, and there are some, how many do you see that are meek? Where are the humble men? Where are the gentle men? Where are the Christ-like men who don't name schools after themselves? Who don't have their face constantly before the world? Who don't speak of themselves? Who aren't the heroes of all their own stories? Who aren't into wardrobe and self-indulgence, and material acquisition? Who don't parade themselves before the world as someone great? Who don't tell you how many people they've led to Christ and how many things they've founded? And how much work they've done? And how great their ministry is? Where are those men, those meek men, those men who are humble? Those men who are of a broken and a contrite spirit who count it a privilege that they should even be able to speak for Christ and are self-effacing? Where are they?

You won't find a lot of them on television. There you find those people who seem to be turned into some kind of almost monstrosity of ego. They become invincible. They don't answer to anybody. They're unaccountable. They're aloof. They're living in their own little isolated world. And they're so intimidating that no one will speak against them. And if anyone knows the truth about them, they buy them off. And the Bible says pride goes before...what?...a fall and a haughty spirit leads to destruction. What happens is pride expands and expands and it's just moving toward a terrible, terrible disaster.

You can't believe your press releases. You really can't. We all battle pride. I battle it, you battle it, we all battle it. We don't want to put ourselves in a position where we feed it. The media has the potential to do that. Before you ever step into that kind of ministry, you be sure that your spiritual roots are down deep and that you understand the virtue of humility and that you have sustained around you godly people who will confront you and hold you accountable so that that thing doesn't turn you into a monster and bring you in a fall that will be heard around the world.

Number nine. Another thing we learn from this is the disastrous result of having your sin revealed...the disastrous result of having your sin revealed. Let me ask you a question. This will get right to the heart. Would you rather have the world find out about your sin, or God find out about it? Fair enough? Would you rather have God know about your sin or the world, be honest. Would you rather have God know about your sin, or your friends? Let me tell you something. Whatever you're hiding from the world and whatever you're hiding from your friends, you're not hiding from God. But if your friends and your reputation are more important than God, then you're going to be more concerned that nobody find out about it than you are that God knows all about it. And this test of your spiritual character is whether you care that God would know. And if you care enough about Him, and

you care whether He would know, then you're going to deal with it before anybody else will ever need to know because it will be an issue dealt with. It's a disaster when you have your sin revealed. And I'll tell you something, the greater your sphere of influence, the greater your potential fall. That's why James said, "Stop being so many teachers, theirs is a greater condemnation." I say to you, young men, if you're going to step into the pulpit and you're going to preach the Word of God and you're going to become a spiritual model of virtue and godliness, and be Christ to your people, then you're going to have to know the disastrous result of your sin when it's revealed.

Oscar Wilde when found out to be a homosexual said, "I forgot that what I did in secret I would some day have to shout from the housetops." And the Old Testament says, "Be sure your sin will...what?...find you out." Daniel 5, you remember, Nebuchadnezzar was celebrating how great he was, he was the great star of his day. And God says, "You're not going to get away with that." And his pride became so great that God struck him down in a devastating judgment and turned him into a raving maniac and his fingernails grew like birds' claws, and his hair grew completely disheveled, and he went out and ate grass like a wile beast for seven seasons, seven years he grazed in a field, the great king Nebuchadnezzar. So great was the fall.

And in a real sense, Jimmy Swaggart or anyone like him is eating grass. Fallen, plunged to the lowest level. You see, the Apostle Paul simply gave us a little model to remember. Whatever you sow, you...what?...you reap. Remember the disastrous result of having your sin revealed. And deal with it between you and God before you have to deal with it between you and the world, or you and men.

Number ten, you may be thinking of others besides the ones I give you. Another lesson that we learn from this is the false standard of spiritual success. How does the church today measure the success of a ministry? How do they measure the success of a ministry? What do you think? What's usually the standard? How many people and how much money. Jimmy Swaggart had a lot of people and a lot of money. How do you think God measured his success? What would God's verdict be on the success of that ministry? Quite different than the world's right? Why? Because 1 Corinthians 5 says God judges on the heart, on the motives and the intent of the heart. And 1 Corinthians 4:1 says it's required of stewards that a man be found faithful. God judges and evaluates a ministry on faithfulness and motive. Was the motive to glorify God? And was the ministry faithful to the Word? And there are a lot of little places with great faithfulness and a lot of humble men, meek men, Christ-like men, godly men preaching in obscurity and God will grant to them His highest commendation while some with the most people and the most money God brings crashing down because they are a rebuke to His name. So don't you ever measure ministry wrongly. No ministry is ever measured by the success outwardly. You want to get a crowd? That's easy...that's easy. Just give something away, promise everybody they can get healed, promise everybody they'll feel good. Promise everybody that if they come there they'll be more successful in their business. Give away money.

Have dancing ladies spinning in the ceiling. Put on a music show. Do all kinds of things. It's easy to get a crowd. You can start a fight and get a crowd. Very difficult to build according to God's standard.

Now sometimes you have a crowd and it's right and God is blessed. And that's the result. But that's not necessarily the true measure of the validity of that ministry. You know something? People didn't want to ever say anything, and this has been true since Charles G. Finney back in the 1820's and 1830's, people didn't want to say anything against a ministry that seemed to be reaching a lot of people because they were afraid to touch that as if the largeness of the thing was the mark of the approval of God...and it isn't. The Jehovah's Witnesses filled Yankee Stadium. So what? That's not of God. That's not the measure. I think when we get to glory we're going to be surprised...surprised whom the Lord honors out of obscurity and some of the more prominent will not be so honored.

Number eleven. I just have twelve, so don't panic. Number eleven, young people, if you don't get anything out of this today, get this, will you? What you learn from Jimmy Swaggart's sin is this, the reality that sin cannot be confined to one area of your life. Did you get that? Sin cannot be confined to one area of your life. You can't compartmentalize sin. You say, "What do you mean by that?" I mean this, if you're fleshly and sinful and carnal and disobedient, it will pervade every area of your life. You can't compartmentalize. You can't say, "Well, I'm doing fine in my Bible study and I'm doing fine in my prayer life, and I'm doing really well in terms of how I'm handling my money and my friendships. It's just that I'm in to pornography."

Wait a minute. You can't compartmentalize that. If you're carnal and fleshly, it's all over the place. So when someone said to me, "What do you think about this Swaggart ministry?" I said look, and this was some time back, you show me a person who is the hero of all his own stories, and I'm being very frank with you, and you show me a person who names things after himself, and you show me a person who desires to do everything he can possibly do to spread his smear as wide as possible, you show me a person who lives in multi-million dollar conditions, you show me a person who is in to Rolls Royces and other things and multi-thousand dollar jewelry and watches and I'll show you a guy who leaks all over the place. And it's only a question of time before it comes out because you can't compartmentalize that. That's something you have to learn. Spirituality is spirituality. And carnality is carnality. And both of them are absolute conditions in which a believer exists at any given moment. And if I'm walking in the Spirit, that shows up every place. And if I'm walking in the flesh, that shows up every place. You can't segment that.

Then one last truth. We learn this, we learn about the need to serve God for His approval, not men's. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:9, "We want to be well-pleasing to Him." I love that. We want to be well-pleasing to Him.

By men's standards, Jimmy Swaggart was a great success. And the people in his church all stood up and gave him standing ovations when he talked about his sin and applauded and they interviewed him afterwards and they said, "He ought to come back. Oh, he's our pastor and everybody makes mistakes and bring him back and bring him back, why God's anointed his life." They're looking at the success of his life from the outside when in his heart he's a disaster...a disaster. He got caught up, I think, in being content to please men, knowing he was really called to please God. But somehow that got pushed into the pocket of self-deception. Perspective in ministry would be lost if you're not continually focusing on is God well-pleased, is God well-pleased, is God well-pleased with my life, and my ministry. Don't ever satisfy men. Always satisfy God. He satisfied men and God destroyed him. Did you get that? God exposed him. He satisfied men. The church was satisfied with what he was doing. The people around him were satisfied with what he was doing. God exposed him and crashed the whole thing.

Well, young people, these were some things I hope you think about and I hope they help you to be discerning. Don't be taken in. Be very discerning. Let me say this in closing, all right?

So what's my response to be to this whole thing? Personally on behalf of Jimmy Swaggart, I think we should pray for him. We should pray that God would grant him repentance. That God would restore him to himself. That God would pour out on him the grace of forgiveness the same grace that I need, that you need, right?

Secondly, we should recognize that the seeds of Jimmy Swaggart's sin may be found in all our sins. Is that not true? That he is a not a solitary monster in human history, we are all potentially the same kind of monster who could sin at the same proportion if given the same influence. And so we are not saying this is one solitary figure in history who has gone beyond the realm of human normalcy. Not so. Each one of us has the potential in our human hearts to be so self-deceived, so prideful, so driven into the flesh that we too could sin against God in such a way given the same sphere of influence. Our crash could be equally as disastrous. The lest we become proud in our own self-righteousness, it should drive us to hold carefully to that slender thread of spiritual credibility and to cling deeply to that desire to be well-pleasing to God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. And we pray for him on the one hand, and we pray for each other that we should not be ever in such a situation.

And then the third thing that I would encourage you to pray for is pray for the integrity of the church. Pray for the people who have to bear the burden of all of this, the blunt of this. Pray somehow that God would lift up in this country some kind of spiritual leadership that has integrity. Can you imagine what the world thinks of us in the church? I mean, they must be laughing at us. What a pile of phonies these people are. And all that does is justify their ungodliness. They're no different than the

rest of us. Religion is a joke. Christianity is a farce.

And then, too, I think it's important for us to realize that in spite of all of this, the Lord Jesus will still build His church and the gates of hell won't prevail against it. Amen? Isn't that wonderful to know? There's been scandals before, they'll be scandals afterwards, but God is still on His throne. And I'm still committed to the ministry, still excited about it and still do know that when the Spirit of God redeems somebody, Jimmy Swaggart or anybody else isn't going to stop that. So we minister with the same joy, the same enthusiasm, the same aggressiveness knowing that God will do His work.

Now these are tough days for those of us who preach Christ. But I believe out of this all, I hope, somehow the Lord will just clean off all that stuff and ministry will go back to godly men, faithfully serving Christ. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the whole focus of the world was away from the stars back to the faithful? And the church got a new life? Do you realize that he took 150 million dollars last year from Christian people. Imagine what that could do if it was directed back into ministries that exalt Jesus Christ and honor His name and lift up His Word and set a pure standard. Maybe that's what God has in mind.

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