“The sins of the godly are worse than others, because they bring a greater reproach upon religion. For the wicked to sin, there is no other expected from them; swine will wallow in the mire; but when sheep do so, when the holy sin, that redounds to the dishonor of the Gospel: ‘By this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.’ ” Puritan Thomas Watson in *The Stain that Stays*, John H. Armstrong, p. 45

**Introduction:**

One of the less pleasant aspects in studying Scripture is what the Holy Spirit records in the biographies of great men and women of faith. Not only do we read of their conquests, but we also find their most shameful sins documented.

What is particularly sobering about men like Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Peter is that each of these men had years of service and faithfully walking with the Lord, and then they stumbled. These Biblical examples as well as contemporary failures remind us that deceitful and sinful inclinations lurk in our hearts.

Ministerial moral failure causes a real stink.

*1 Timothy 4:16* Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.

**Personal Holiness**—Pay close attention to yourself

⇒ Remember the process of sanctification is not complete in you

Timothy was still in the process of spiritual growth, as are we.

Proverbs 4:23 Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life.

God’s Word must minister to your heart.

The truths that Timothy would command and teach (v. 11) were to minister to him also.

1 Tim. 4:13—Give attention to the reading of Scripture, exhortation, and teaching

1 Tim. 4:15—Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them
→ Take Biblical teaching seriously

1 Tim. 4:6—Timothy was to promote [In pointing out these things to the brethren], ponder [be nourished on the words of faith], and practice [sound doctrine which you have been following] these things.

If the study of the Word becomes focused on correct ideas more than on submission to the Lord who is revealed by those ideas, something is wrong.

→ Allow the Word of God to change your life

It is dangerous to handle the Word of truth and fail to gaze into the mirror of the Word personally.

Spiritual maturity is not about how much you know; it is about how much God’s grace has transformed your life.

→ Realize that your life impacts others

...you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you

“Paul is assuming that the condition of Timothy’s heart will somehow, someway shape the direction and fruitfulness of his ministry….If you daily work to guard your heart, you are at the same time making a daily commitment to pastor and protect your people.” Paul Tripp, Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry, p.188.

→ Listen to those striving to faithfully practice and promote the truth—them that hear...

Practical Helps for Guarding Moral Integrity

➢ Recognize the magnitude of the problem

Be warned by Biblical examples of failure—Samson, Solomon, David, etc.

Being confident, capable, wise, and warm-hearted toward the Lord is no guarantee we won’t fall.
➢ Recognize the times of danger

Times of increased pressure (Moses)
Times of too much leisure (David)
After times of success or achievement (Elijah)
When tempted by a provocative woman (Proverbs 6)

➢ Recognize personal responsibility for thoughts and actions

➢ Be on guard; pay close attention to...

Mind—Philippians 4:8
“If you lose the battle in the mind, eventually you will lose the battle in
the body.”

Eyes—Job 31:1
If holy men of old knew the importance of guarding their gaze, how
much more must we?

Your marriage—Proverbs 5:15-23

Testimony

➢ Cultivate a passionate spiritual life

➢ Ponder the consequences of sin

Confront the fantasy of forbidden fruit with the reality of moral failure

Consider the consequences in various areas of life relationships and ministry:
    Relationship with the Lord, spouse, children, church, peers, self, unsaved

1. Dishonor the Lord; bring reproach on the name of Christ.

2. Mar the picture of Christ's redemptive work and reconciliation that is
displayed in the marriage relationship (Eph. 5).

3. Contradict the character of God who is true and faithful.

4. WIFE: Destroy loyalty and trust by breaking the publically promised
   covenental faithfulness.
5. Shatter stability and create turmoil in almost every area of life—emotionally, financially, spiritually, socially

6. Grieve and embitter them for the hurt caused to their mother

7. Distract them from school, work, and ministry and rob them of joy.

8. MINISTRY: Become a source of confusion and discord in the church

9. Destroy the heart of spiritual leadership—i.e. trust

10. Reap the greater condemnation of a teacher who falls

11. Become a burden rather than a blessing to fellow laborers in ministry

12. Sin against my body in a unique way—1 Cor. 6:18-20

13. Relinquish moral high ground when dealing with future issues

14. Waste years of training and ministry experience

15. OTHERS: Contribute to the moral and spiritual fall of another person—violating their soul

Rather than conclude on a discouraging note, look again at 1 Timothy 4:16:
Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for **as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.**

→ Live in anticipation of your full salvation—**you will ensure salvation**...

“You have a heaven to win yourselves.... A holy calling will not save an unholy man.” Richard Baxter

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Matthew 5:8

**Resources:**
