

# Pitfalls

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So, I would like to begin by reading from the book of John. The 10<sup>th</sup> chapter verses 7-18.

**John 10:7-18**

**<sup>7</sup> Therefore Jesus said again, “I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. <sup>8</sup> All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listened to them. <sup>9</sup> I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.<sup>[a]</sup> He will come in and go out, and find pasture. <sup>10</sup> The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.**

**<sup>11</sup> “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup> The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. <sup>13</sup> The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.**

**<sup>14</sup> “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— <sup>15</sup> just as the Father knows me and I know the Father —and I lay down my life for the sheep. <sup>16</sup> I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also.**

**They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. <sup>17</sup> The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life —only to take it up again. <sup>18</sup> No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”**

So about a month and a half ago or so, Baxter approached me and asked if I would be willing to speak this morning. At first I told him I needed a little time to think about it. Eventually I decided to accept his offer but then came the next question... What am I going to talk about? The answer came to me while I was at work. I was in the front office when a visitor showed up to meet with someone. See in the lobby of our front office we have installed a cordless doorbell and there are about a dozen or so different chimes that can be selected to go off when it is pushed. Typically our doorbell is set for a very generic Ding Dong, but for whatever reason someone had changed the setting. When I heard the tone, it clicked. THIS IS what I will I talk about.

See I like trivia. For whatever reason odd obscure things interest me and when I read or hear some strange fact or bit of information I have a tendency to remember it. For instance, I could explain to you why a pound of gold actually is lighter than a pound of feathers, or explain how the 8<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> numbers of an Wisconsin issued driver's license reveal the owner's age, birthday and gender. Anyway, when I heard this doorbell it reminded me of an article that I had read years ago that had one of these little tidbits in it. In a few minutes I'm going to share that information with you but first I want to tell you a personal story.

Back in the early 80's, I was in grade school and my “best friend” was a kid that lived down the street named Jason Vodnik. Jason and I hung out quite a bit. We played over at my house often enough, but most of the time we hung out at his house. Why? Because Jason was spoiled. Don't get me wrong, I was probably spoiled too, but Jason always had the BEST toys. At my house we, like a lot of families in the 80's, had an Atari 2600. Those of you that had one or played one are probably picturing it's archaic graphics as I speak and those of you that are

less than 30 years old probably have No clue what I am even talking about. So for your sakes, consider it the first mainstream home gaming system, kinda like an X-box or a Playstation, if the characters in the games were stick figures. So anyway, we had an Atari, but JASON, he had an Intellivision.

Much better graphics, much better sound, and about twice the price. Needless to say we spent a lot of time in his family room playing games together on his Intellivision. One of our favorite games was “Pitfall”. This was a linear scrolling screen game where you started in the middle of the screen and had to go towards the right. As you did the screen would advance by rolling towards the left. So you would appear to be moving, but really you pretty much stayed at the same place on the TV. You had to swing on vines over spiked pits, jump over alligators, and avoid scorpions. The object of this game was endure all of these obstacles until your character “Pitfall Harry” successfully got to the end. It was very hard to do this without dying, so the game designers were smart enough to put in a reset button that would place you safely back onto the path in the event you messed up.

Now as I said, Jason and I spent a lot of our youth sitting in his family room playing this game. Now across the room from the TV in Jason’s house was huge grandfather clock, and every fifteen minutes it would chime. In fact even before I had learned to tell time, I realized I could determine when I had to be home by counting how many times the clock would chime. The chime was a very common one, in fact I am sure most of you have heard it before it went **DUM.....** ! THIS was sound the doorbell at work had been set to.

Now back to that article I had read. See it was about this chime. The tune was written in 1793 to be used for a new clock being built for a church at the Cambridge University in England. There is some debate as to who the actual composer was but it is often credited to Dr. Joseph Jowett who was the Regius Professor of Civil Law at the University. The tune is believed to be a variation of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> bars from Handel’s Messiah. In the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century these chimes were adopted by the Big Ben Clock located at the Palace of Westminster in

London and have since become known as the Westminster Quarters. As it turns out not only does the chime have a name but it also has lyrics. The words go:

*Oh Lord Our God, Be Thou our Guide,*

*That by Thy help, No foot may slide.*

When I read this, for whatever reason, I was reminded of Mathew 7 verses 13 & 14.

**13 “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it**

See the gate is small and the road is narrow. Seems to me like there is very little room for a foot to safely slide. Not to add to the bible but my experiences are that not only is the way narrow, but the path is filled with spiked pits, and alligators, and scorpions. It is SO easy to get off track, or to get taken off the path by temptation, its bite, its sting, its fall. To give into sin, to lose our way. ONLY if we allow HIM to be our guide, if we turn our lives over to Christ, can we hope to stay on the path. Now that being said, we are human. We will sin, and we will slide. In this life, the scorpions will sting us, the alligators will bite use, and we will probably fall into a pit or two. Fortunately the Great Designer had a plan. See He put in a reset button. He sent his son, Christ, to be our sacrifice so that through him we can get back on the right path even after we mess up and make a mistake.

See Jesus said

**“I am the Gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.”**

**“I am the good Shepard; I know my sheep and my sheep know me.”**

**“I am the good Shepard, The good Shepard lays down his life for the sheep”**

**“No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.”**

Now that's love. Now that's sacrifice. Christ has offered you this gift. He has hung, he has bled and he has died for me and for you. But unless we give up control, unless we say “Christ, be my Guide, lead me, because without you I cannot find the way to the Father.” Unless we accept the life that he is offering, We will not enter through the narrow gate. If there is anyone here that is ready to turn their life over, to confess that Christ is the Son of the one and only God, to be immersed and reborn for the forgiveness of their sins. Or perhaps there is one among us who has gotten off the path. Who has fallen into a pit, or has given in to temptation, and you would like to ask the church for its prayers, if so I ask that you come forward, as we stand and sing.