TAKE HEED LEST YOU FALL

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Category: Observations

Last night while browsing Twitter, I came across this dreadful news:

> *An Oxford University theology professor and former pastor who downloaded 28,000 child abuse images and videos has been sentenced to a year in prison and placed on the sex offender register in France.*
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> *Jan Joosten, 61, who holds the prestigious regius professorship of Hebrew at Oxford, wasÂ suspended by the universityâ€™s Faculty of Oriental Studies and Christ Church College on Monday night. He is considered one of the most distinguished biblical scholars of his generation.*
>
> *The Guardian*

You can find the full story here.

Just pause to think about what is going on here. A man who has led churches and who has immersed himself in the Bible for his whole life has downloaded stacks of child pornography, providing a market for those who profit from kidnapping and abusing small children. I make no apology for calling this horrific.

https://twitter.com/DrPJWilliams/status/1275157178970767366

The impacts will be felt in academia, Joosten's work will inevitably be tainted and his students will suddenly find that their glittering CVs are worth much less than they had hoped. However, the real impact of this lies in shady backstreets and basement film studies where children are violated for profit. These are the real victims and we must not lose sight of them.

However, the reason that I raise this issue is not so much out of a sense of outrage or sadness, but as a warning to those of us who spend our lives immersed in the Bible. I'm sure that at some point, Joosten visited his first dodgy website, convinced that it wouldn't do any harm. He was a pastor, a distinguished biblical scholar, of course, he could handle a little bit of temptation - but he couldn't.

It might be tempting to say that he was an academic, not a church worker and that his approach to the Bible wasn't the same as ours, or even to take some comfort in the fact that he wasn't an evangelical - it wouldn't happen to one of our tribe, but that would be to miss the point entirely.

None of us is immune to temptation of one sort or another and a slip can ruin our life and ministry.

There is one key lesson to learn from this sorry mess and Paul sums it up nicely:

> *So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you donâ€™t fall!*
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> *1 Corinthians 10:12*