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A TRULY TERRIBLE DECISION

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The Upjohn Corporation was a pharmaceutical company that was founded in my hometown of Kalamazoo, Michigan, well over a hundred years ago. It's no longer in operation, but some of the products they engineered live on. One of those was a product introduced as Loniten, which was intended to reduce high blood pressure. The product was found to have an interesting side effect: it could actually slow the onset of male-pattern baldness, or even regenerate lost hair. The drug was remarketed under a new name that perhaps you've seen: Rogaine.

Now, it's all fine and good if a drug has a side effect that could be useful to you; but what if that particular drug had the unintended effect of growing even more hair than just the hair that was missing? It's hard enough to keep up with the hair that wants to protrude from ears and noses; what if the product accelerated that growth, or caused women to grow beards?

As a side note, I don't envy women. I rather enjoy having a beard so that in those rare moments of quiet contemplation, I have something to stroke most soothingly, like so: [demonstrate]. Ah, the unparalleled joys of manhood! But I digress.

The truth is that sometimes what is advertised on the label is not what actually comes out of the bottle. Sometimes, prescriptions are mixed up through human error or even human malice. What was believed to be helpful becomes harmful. In some cases, people who know full well what is in a bottle and what will happen if they use the contents inappropriately do so anyway. They make a conscious choice to use something that poisons their body--sometimes resulting in sudden death or serious illness, but much more frequently just to "have a little fun," killing themselves little by little, destroying body and mind a fraction at a time.

In Genesis 3, we have found that Satan has offered the woman just such a product.

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

Satan informed her that she can be as God, knowing good and evil. She will *know for herself*. She will *make her own choices*. She will assert her independence and step forth as a new being, equal to God Himself. It is sheer deceit.

This brings us to our our study of Scripture today. Let's continue in Genesis 3, starting in verse 6:

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

The woman had no sin nature with which to contend. Her choice was her own to make. There was no

behavioral, societal, or psychological conditioning or mechanism to influence her. She was a free moral agent, able to evaluate the doubt, denial and delusion offered by the serpent against her knowledge of God's nature and command to her. She was free to choose; her choice was her own; and in this verse, she makes her choice. The choice to believe Satan rather than God is the point of sin; the sin began internally, as it always does, and moved to the external, as it always does. In this case, the move was almost instantaneous; in other cases, the move from internal to external is hidden away for some time from the sight of others, but sin always does move from internal to external.

This is why, when the scribes and Pharisees rebuked Jesus for letting His disciples eat without first washing their hands, He responded that it's not what goes into the belly through the mouth that defiles, but what is already in there which comes out of the mouth that defiles.

The woman here believes Satan's lie, or perhaps suspends her disbelief of it, and examines the fruit: "A fruit like that must surely be nourishing for the body; after all, it is very beautiful." She makes the common mistake of judging the interior by the exterior, which we all do sometimes. The farther we stray from God's Word, the easier it is for us to be ensnared by cosmetic coverings.

If you've ever been a part of a youth group or have been to some kind of camp, you might remember various food games. Maybe you had to be the first to eat a stack of crackers and then be able to whistle a tune; or maybe you had to be the first to eat a tin of sardines. I remember as a teen being involved in such things. On one occasion, after having previous contestants consume cans of prune juice and other disagreeable things, the game leader brought up the next contestants and presented them with caramel covered apples. The contestants really thought they were the lucky ones, until they bit heartily into the "apples" and found them to be onions in disguise! Oh, the faces! The contestants hadn't nibbled that first bite; they had chomped a mouthful.

It wasn't wrong to notice that the fruit was attractive; after all, God had made this tree and declared it, along with the rest of creation, to be "very good"; but the fruit of this tree was not intended for human consumption, and it was a mistake to assume that it would *taste* good because it *looked* good. Perhaps it would taste good; perhaps it wouldn't. The point is not how it *looked* or how it *tasted*, but the fact that she was *drawn away from what she knew to be right*.

Many preachers have rightly pointed to 1 John 2:15-16 in relation to this verse in Genesis 3:

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Satan is the leader of this world's system, the prince of the power of the air. He did not love the woman; nor does he love you. The world does not love you, despite its glossy promises. It is a machine whose sole purpose is to cause you by whatever means necessary to deviate from God's Word. The world uses three powerful weapons against humanity: the lust [desire] of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. It has been well noted that the fruit had appeal in all three of these categories.

First, it was "good for food." Remember, the woman had access to *every other tree* of the garden, and she was told she could *freely eat* of any of those trees. "This fruit is right here, and I want something to eat right now!" The fruit appealed to her flesh, her body. There were other choices which were

appropriate, but she regarded this fruit in the light of convenience and the satisfaction that she thought it would provide. She believed it would be “good for food.”

This reminds me of when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness to turn stones into bread. That act alone would not have been wrong for Jesus as Creator God; but it was not yet in the Father’s timing for Him to break his fast and eat. My previous boss, Dr. Ron Cottle, shared a saying with me: “Ninety percent of the will of God is timing.” You won’t find that statement as such in Scripture, but you will definitely find it to be thoroughly scriptural in principal.

Not only did the fruit appeal to the woman’s body, but it also appealed to her eyes. She saw that it was “pleasant to the eyes.” There is no doubt that it was attractive. It was made by God and declared to be “very good.” It was beautiful, just as the serpent was beautiful; but certainly there were other beautiful things for her to behold in that garden! Her husband was undoubtedly the very epitome of manly beauty. The other trees and the entire garden must have been wonderful to behold. And yes, even this tree was intended to be beautiful; but she felt drawn to this beauty in a sense that was unnatural. It was perfectly natural for her to eat of all the other trees; but there was a known prohibition against eating the fruit of this one, and therefore her attraction to its beauty becomes unnatural. It became distorted by her desire to go beyond merely looking and admiring. Sin distorts that which is beautiful when our attitude toward something beautiful is perverted into covetousness--and that is exactly what the woman experienced at this point of decision. John calls this the lust, or desire, of the eyes.

Francis Schaeffer put this very well:

Eve, with these things in her mind, is actually standing in the situation of the last commandment of the Ten Commandments: “Thou shalt not covet” (Ex. 20:17). After all the external commandments comes the commandment on which all the others rest. Coveting, wanting that which is not properly mine as I stand as a creature before the law of God, is really the basis of all sin, for it is the internal attitude which leads to the external breaking of the other nine commandments.”¹

It was this same kind of desire that affected King David as he saw Bathsheba and reached out to take her as his own. David believed her beauty would bring him happiness, but his sin had long lasting consequences for him, for her, for his family, and for the entire kingdom. When David saw the beauty of Bathsheba, he knew it was wrong to desire her, but he did not know how terrible the consequences would be--nor did he care at that moment. How much blood would be spilled for that one sin? How many sleepless nights and miserable days would follow? He did not know, nor did he care, until it was too late.

There was a family who decided to take a vacation in the mountains, and for this vacation they reserved a cabin. When they arrived, they found the cabin to be slightly less attractive than advertised, but they unpacked and began to make themselves at home. After a few minutes, one of the children came and asked the father about a birthday party. The father was confused and asked what the boy meant. The little boy said that he had found sprinkles, like those on cupcakes. It turned out that not only had the boy found green sprinkles, but had eaten some. By this time the parents were very distressed, because they guessed, as you might have, that the child had eaten rat poison.

1 Francis Schaeffer, *Genesis in Space and Time* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), p. 82.

Now, that was a little boy who didn't really know any better. He probably had an idea that you don't eat things off the floor, but these were still in a little box. He saw them and ate them because he thought they would taste good. I'm sure he was disappointed, but you'll be happy to know that the little boy was just fine. The parents--well, that's another matter, but the boy was fine after all.

If the little boy had been a young rat or mouse, the outcome would have been rather different, though. The rat poison is effective on rodents because it is mostly good. It's attractive to rodents. It appeals to them--and it kills them.

Sin is like that. It is the nature of sin to be deadly, even if it is disguised as something attractive and good. What is advertised on the label is not the full story of what becomes of those who consume what is in the bottle.

The woman's temptation was on another front as well. She certainly was tempted by the *lust of the flesh* and the *lust of the eyes*, but the part that cinched the deal was temptation by the *pride of life*. Notice the verse again: "*and a tree to be desired to make one wise.*" This is Satan's lie taking hold of the woman's pride--she could be as God, knowing good and evil. The lie in her heart might have sounded something like this: "If I could be as wise as God just by eating this one fruit, then why shouldn't I? God is keeping from me knowledge that *I deserve*; it just isn't fair that He should have all the wisdom."

In that moment, she trampled the goodness of God toward her under her feet. She disdained her exalted position as queen of the earth, as a child of Creator God, and as the only bride of a perfect man, ever (and don't you know it!) Think of it: God had given her all of creation except for the fruit of one tree. Even today we find creation so vast that we have yet to discover its fathomless deeps, and very nearly all was under her dominion. All that she had was not enough; all that mattered was the one thing God had reserved unto Himself, one tiny speck of creation that was His alone. She desired that speck and traded the vastness of her riches on the gamble that *that one speck would be worth more*. She gambled her very life against the worth of that one fruit and the knowledge that it was supposed to bring.

It was not only her own life at stake, though. We do not know where Adam was while the woman talked to the serpent. We can speculate regarding his nearness or farness, but it would seem the serpent waited until the man and the woman were separated. After eating the fruit, though, she wasted no time in finding her husband and giving him the fruit. The Bible simply says here, "*She took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.*" She ate first, and then gave to Adam.

We know why the woman ate the fruit, because this account tells us directly what was in her heart and mind. The account does not tell us why the man ate; but the mystery is not hard to unravel. Paul tells us in 1 Tim. 4:12,

And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.

Adam saw that his wife had eaten the fruit, even as she offered it to him; but he was not tempted by the serpent. In fact, the serpent had no need to tempt Adam; his work was finished. The woman had eaten, and it would naturally follow that the man would eat. Francis Schaeffer puts it this way:

Temptation is extremely hard to resist when it is bound up in the man-woman relationship.... Two great drives are built into man. The first is his need for a relationship to God, and the second his need for a relationship to the opposite sex.²

The woman presented her husband with a choice: he must follow her to whatever end, or follow God and suffer separation from his wife. The Bible marks no hesitation on Adam's part. He cast his lot with his wife in rebellion against God.

The desire for a marriage relationship is very strong, even at the cost of following God. God made very strict prohibitions in the Old Testament regarding marriageable partners. The Israelites were not to marry the pagans of the surrounding cultures. When God's people disobeyed, they invariably were drawn away from God into the idolatrous worship of their mates. We see the pattern over and over again. Even King Solomon, who built a mighty temple for the worship of God, who saw God's own Shekinah Glory fill that temple at its opening ceremony--yes, even he was led into idolatry by his pagan wives. Paul expands this teaching in the New Testament to apply to Christians of all nationalities. Listen to the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians chapter 6:

14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.

How many Christian women, feeling the need for marriage, have fallen in love with an unsaved man, thinking they could change him? How many Christian men have made light of this Scripture and married a woman outside of the family of God? I have seen these marriages and have heard the reasoning, the rationale, for going through with them; and I've seen non-Christians put on a show leading up to the wedding. In some cases the unmarried spouse may come around, but generally this is not the case. We are unwise to disregard the power of the marriage relationship and the effect it can have on our relationship with God.

There is a flipside: the marriage relationship can also have a powerful effect for good on our relationship with God. The man and woman, standing together in close relationship to God and to each other, are a force to be reckoned with. They can build each other up and create something unique and wonderful in the sight of God and man. We have some folks in this church who are living examples of what a marriage can be, founded on love for God and each other. I suspect that had the man and woman been together and had carefully hidden God's word in their hearts, the outcome that day might have been different; but it is not for us to know what *might* have been.

The point today is that the woman had her reasons for rebelling against God, and the man had his reasons for rebelling against God. *We would be foolish to ignore those reasons, for they are the*

² Ibid., p. 86.

universal experience of mankind. We all experience the temptation to rebel against God's clear commands, and those temptations come to us in the same manner today. We close by repeating 1 John 2:15-16:

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.