

On Guard

It would be so nice if all dangers were clearly marked, or if an opponent would always warn us, as in chess, to be on guard when we were in danger of losing something valuable. But, life is not that way. Anyone or anything can be attacked in many ways and there is seldom a warning. Head-on attacks are easy to spot and not too difficult to defeat with a superior force, but subtle attacks are something else. They are much more difficult to overcome for several reasons. The enemy is often unrecognizable and a counter attack is often delayed until the attack is well on the way and established. We can become trapped by gradual changes without realizing it.

Consider the lesson I read of how to trap wild pigs. By nature, they are very wary and cautious, however, a subtle trap easily snares them. First, you feed them with no fence. Then gradually build a fence around the food. The pigs find that they are not hindered and continue to return to feed again. Finally, the fence is completed and the gate is left open. This time when the pigs enter to feed, the gate needs only to be closed to entrap the whole herd. They did not know what the fence was for until it was too late.

We had a hard time fighting the enemy in Vietnam, like in Iraq or any terrorist battle, because the enemy often looked just like the peaceful population. They did not wear uniforms. Of course, it doesn't help when you are not allowed to chase the enemy all the way home and defeat him there, but that is another topic. The real point is that you have to be on guard to watch for and recognize when an action is to be harmful to what you hold dear.

Perhaps, we also need to worry about our individual freedoms as well when we get so used to depending on government to solve our problems. Every time we tell government to "handle it" we grow more dependant on someone else instead of figuring out ourselves how to work toward a solution or working with others to resolve the need. More dependance means less ingenuity and problem solving skills and less pride in our own accomplishments. Also, less community pride. Of course, there will be some times when major disasters happen or when we cannot physically help ourselves. That is what friends and family are for.

Eve and Adam might have had a better chance of not falling into temptation if all the apples had been marked with x's for death or s's for sin. Instead, Satan diverted their attention by first distracting them by focusing on what God was withholding from them instead of all that He had given them. Then the snake followed up with a lie that "surely they would not die" as God had said. The lie did not change the fact that it was still sin and they did die, because they wanted to judge for themselves what was right and wrong. In effect, they put their will above God's. Big mistake! We all are still paying for it. God warns us to be watchful because danger and sin are always lurking and seeking to destroy us. See

1Pe 5:8 “ Be sensible and vigilant, because your adversary the Devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking someone he may devour;”

Even today, we rationalize that surly a little sin will not hurt as God will overlook it. Watch out, God makes no distinction as to how serious various sins are. Sin is sin, and we all need repentance, forgiveness and the grace of Christ.

Similarly, education can be gradually taken from us. Every time that we allow ourselves to use poor English or spelling we get more and more accustomed to incorrect habits that degrade our learning. Math is a lot easier, for mistakes are more easily found when poor answers occur. Language, however, is in large part determined by custom. It changes whenever custom overcomes good habits just like continued bad manners result in characters that are not pleasant to be around. Singing off-key will always sound bad so we guard against it. Why shouldn't we also be just as cautious to try and set a good example in our speech, spelling and tempers? Errors do distract from the real message that we are trying to convey. Of course, there will be times when we make mistakes. I do. I am just saying, shouldn't we try with a real effort to be watchful against things that can detract from our being less than our potential ?

Larry Lipps