

Confusion and Transgression

When a person has clear convictions about right and wrong, but has acted or is about to act contrary to those convictions, it is not uncommon for to hear them say: "I have become so confused I don't know what is right anymore." According to the HS, Eve seems to have suffered from such "confusion." Regarding her sin Paul wrote . . .

(1 Tim 2:14) And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

To say that Eve was deceived is not to say that she was ignorant of God's command.

We cannot know how long Adam and Eve avoided the forbidden tree. With so many other trees from which to eat, there was no need to eat of it. There is no evidence of confusion regarding the right and wrong of eating or the wisdom of abstaining. They were happy ignoring it.

But along came Satan who not only placed doubt in Eve's mind about the justness of the penalty for eating the tree, but who deceived her into thinking that God selfishly gave this command in the first place.

In his initial question the serpent's intent was to create doubt in the woman's heart "with respect to the exact wording and the precise purpose of the divine command;" (G. Ch. Aalders, Genesis, Vol. 1, 99); he tempts her to question the fairness and justice of this command. And, as seen from her answer, he enjoyed a measure of success. The woman said:

(Gen 3:23) . . . "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; {3} but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

The woman shows clearly that she understood that neither she nor her husband had been given authority to eat from "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." However, the devil does succeed in confusing her about the wording of the

command. If you compare what she said to what God had originally told them, Eve actually makes the command more restrictive. Whereas God had said, “but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat” (Gen 2:17), the woman said, “(Gen 3:3 NNAS) but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it . . .’” (Gen 3:3).

Furthermore, with regard to the consequence for eating, whereas God had said “you will surely die,” making death a certainty if they ate of the tree, the woman makes it only a possibility – “You shall not eat it . . . lest you die” (NASB, NKJB). In this point the revision of the NASB and the NIV both err in the way they translate the verse. In these translations there is no difference between what Eve says and what God says. But in the Hebrew language a difference is made. A word is used which indicates that death is only a possibility, not a certainty. Thus, the older translations are correct when they translate her words “lest you die.” By the use of this word Eve is declaring that she does not believe that will certainly follow if they eat from the tree, but that it is a strong possibility.

Eve’s deception is completed when she buys into the devil’s lie that God had been selfish in withholding this fruit from them. Death was not the consequence of eating, but becoming like God.

(Gen 3:5-6) "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

As stated previously, we cannot know how long Adam and Eve avoided the forbidden tree. There is no evidence of confusion regarding the right and wrong of eating or the wisdom of abstaining. But along came Satan threw a spanner into the works, presenting the woman with temptations that caused her to be confused about God’s command and its consequences. The serpent drew her to the attention to the tree she had been avoiding. He drew her attention to the beauty of the fruit and convinced her, perhaps by eating of it himself, that it was

good for food. If he did eat of it, the fact that he did not die surely gave support to his contention that she would not die. One can see the confusion mounting. The arguments she had considered conclusive against eating were rapidly being matched by arguments for doing so. Which arguments were valid? Both seemed to be.

Had Adam been nearby, or had God spoken again, she might have been reminded once more of the strong reasons for rejecting the fruit. But as it was, the voice of God grew weaker in her memory as the desirability of the fruit was magnified by Satan's glib lies. All that was needed to tip the balance was the final suggestion of an apparent virtue in eating – the thought that she would become like God. Never mind the legalistic prohibition; surely one could not be blamed for wanting to be like God.

"She took from its fruit and ate" (Genesis 3:6). Tragic words! Tragic consequences! Consequences reaching down through countless generations even to us!

The great mistake of Eve was in allowing herself even to begin thinking about disobedience; this is when confusion set in. And this was the mistake of Achan when he first saw the Babylonian garment. Achan lived at the time when the children of Israel conquered the Promised Land. He was there when Jericho was defeated and he knew that all things in the city except for Rahab and her family who were with her in her house, were under a ban – the city and all that was in it belonged to the LORD (Josh 6:17). He knew from this that everything in the city was to be destroyed; that none of it was to become spoils for he or people. However, we are told in Josh 7:1 that "Achan . . . took some of the things under the ban" which caused "the anger of the LORD burned against the sons of Israel. When Achan is discovered here was his excuse, "when I saw among the spoil a beautiful mantle from Shinar and two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold fifty shekels in weight, then I coveted them and took them" (Josh 7:21). The mantle was so beautiful and the gold and silver . . . with all the rest being destroyed, what's the harm in me having just little of it? Once he set his heart on

what God had forbidden, the rest became easy. Perhaps he justified himself saying, "Surely no one would know if I took and with everything else being destroyed, surely God would not consider it a big deal, would He?" But God considered it a "big deal" as Achan and those who helped him hide transgression were soon to find out.

Brethren. what happened to Eve and Achan, what happened to David in his sin with Bathsheba happens to us each time we sin. The Bible says as much in James 1:14-15:

But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. {15} Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

There is ample defense available to keep us from confusion and transgression.

1. Treasuring God's laws in our hearts: "Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You" (Psa 119:11)
2. Prayer – asking God to deliver us from temptation: "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matt 6:13).
3. Look for a way of escape when we are tempted: "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it" (1 Cor 10:13)

But all too often, in the name of open-mindedness and objectivity, we feel we are obligated to look at the other side, to consider the "arguments in favor of" sin. We may even be so foolish as to parrot the existential line: "I must get away to myself and sort things out." If this means getting away for Bible study, meditation and prayer, fine! But this is seldom what it means. As a rule, what it means is: "I want to be left alone to rationalize my way through the sin that entices me without having to reason with those who would logically or scripturally expose my folly."

Such conflict between conscience and passion, between logic and emotion, between authority and anarchy, between flesh and spirit will indeed produce confusion —confusion bordering on insanity. But it is a confusion for which we are responsible. It is the peculiar malady of “those who perish because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved” and who “did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thessalonians 2:10,12). It is never surprising when such a person, “being deceived,” falls into transgression.

In Jesus’ day, “there was a division among the people because of Him” (John 7:43). They were confused by the contradictions between His claims and the accusations of their rulers. Jesus stated clearly who would not be confused: “if anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak of My own authority” (John 7:17).

Wanting to do God’s will will save us from the confusion, deception and transgression into which our mother fell.

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