

Looks Fair, Feels Foul

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Many of you may not know if you do not know me that well, but I am a long-time *Lord of the Rings* enthusiast. I began reading *The Hobbit* in the sixth grade. It was an assignment that our teacher gave us, to read *The Hobbit*, and I loved it. I loved *The Hobbit*. I loved his writing style. I have always liked the fantasy genre. As soon as we finished *The Hobbit*, I jumped feet first into *The Lord of the Rings*, and read it and read it and read it. I have read it more than a dozen times in my life since then. Of course, I am almost 50 now so I could have read it a lot. But I really enjoy it.

A lot of people do not understand *Lord of the Rings*. They think it is a typical fantasy story and a lot of that is because of the way it was produced on the big screen. They got a horror director to produce it and it inflated a lot of the horror parts of it, the more mythological parts or whatever; the beasts and all the fighting and such which were, yes, part of *Lord of the Rings*, but they were not the emphasized parts. So, the books are actually quite different from the movie in my estimation.

But I learned a great deal from *The Lord of the Rings*. I learned a great deal from Professor Tolkien. A lot of people do not know that Professor Tolkien, not only being a scholar of Anglo-Saxon, a linguist, a philologist as they call it over there, he was also a very devout Catholic and he, in his letters later on when people were talking to him about his works, said that *The Lord of the Rings* and to a lesser extent, *The Hobbit*, is a very Catholic work, meaning that he wrote it with his understanding of Catholicism in mind. There are a lot of things in *The Lord of the Rings* that is not on the surface, it is underneath where what we call Christian doctrine or Christian morality or Christian virtues are being talked about or emphasized in some way.

He was a very thoughtful man. He put a lot of his ideas and thinking, a lot of his morality into the books. Of course, it does not come out in the goblins and the orcs and such like that. It comes out in the hobbits and in some of the

other creatures, like some of the men, particularly Aragorn the king and Gandalf the Gray, who is a wizard, and the elves.

Anyway, that just helps you understand what I am getting at here. He used the fantasy genre to explain his understanding of what we would call the gospel. And it is not blatant at all.

Of course, it is Catholic so you have various symbols in *The Lord of the Rings* like lembas bread. You might have seen that in the the movies and also in the books. It was something that they took every day. It was enough to sustain them for one day, it would give them strength to get through one day. Of course, this to him was communion and that was the communion wafer. Lembas was bread and this was what sustained them. That is just one example of how he put his Catholic understanding in *The Lord of the Rings*.

Now, I am going to pull a principle out of *Lord of the Rings* that has nothing to do with Catholicism. It has everything to do with what we need to be doing and thinking about as we go through life. It is just a very simple principle, but it is something that we need to keep in the forefront of our minds because it is coming at us full blast right now.

This is the illustration that I want to talk about. This is in *The Fellowship of the Ring* very early on. The four hobbits have left Hobbiton, left the Shire, and they have had some very harrowing adventures. They have had to go through the old forest where they were trapped by a tree that was an evil tree. They had to be rescued by Tom Bombadil. And he was a wonderful person. Gave them a place to sleep and gave them some good advice and then he sent them off. Then they went into the barrows of these old kings that had died. And there they had met up with an old spirit that did not like them and tried to trap them there and Tom had to save them. And of course, all along through this, they had been pursued by the Nazgul, the ring wraiths, and they were terrifying. Little hobbits did not know how to fight them at all. And it was just a horrible, horrible adventure that they had.

Finally, they come out on the road and they are right outside the town of Bree. Bree is where they were supposed to meet Gandalf so that they could go on the rest of their journey. Well, they get into Bree and they find Bree in a very uneasy state. Things are not going well in Bree either. People have

come up from the South, people (they call them southrons) that nobody trusted, they were wicked people, they were thieves. A lot of them were fleeing from problems down in the south and they were causing problems in Bree.

So when they get there, it is just a little bit less worse than it had been on the road. So they go into the Prancing Pony, which is an inn by the way, where they were supposed to meet Gandalf and they find he is not there. So they go out into the little restaurant area there and they are having something to drink and something to eat. And there is this man across the room, rather unkempt, dressed in woodsman's garb with a great big cloak, but with a hood on, covering his face. He has got a beard. He just looks totally disreputable, but he keeps watching them. He looks at them, stares at them, and he is not smiling. He is smoking a pipe, but it does not look like he is smoking it for enjoyment. He is smoking it watching them. He has got his eye on them. Rough looking man.

Now, you have to understand hobbits were very insulated people. They did not have dealings with big people—us—as they would call them. They did not know how to deal with people of great big size, much stronger than them, who had been out in the world. And so this man made them very afraid; they would like to avoid him. They considered him, just by looking at him, a rascal and a rogue. Obviously, he was going to slit their throats and steal their money and any valuables that they might have on them.

Well, this man introduces himself. He is called Strider and he offers to help them get out of Bree safely. Now, Frodo's trusted servant, a man named Sam Gamgee, he wants nothing to do with him and tells Frodo that this is a bad man. They should get away and they should have nothing to do with him at all. And young Pippin is also very uncomfortable with Strider. He is just skittish about it. But Frodo decides, against all the advice of his friends, against all that he sees with his eyes, he decides to take a chance on Strider. He tells Strider, 'I think you're not really as you choose to look. You have frightened me several times tonight but never in the way that servants of the enemy would, or so I imagine. I think one of his spies would, well, seem fairer and feel fouler, if you understand.' Then Strider had to laugh. He said, "I see. I look foul and feel fair. Is that it?"

Frodo's description of the enemy's servants is a very insightful one and we need to be aware of this.

In this very deceitful world, our enemy is Satan the Devil and he has all kinds of servants. And he wants to lure us—especially us—into this world and out of the way of God into his way of doing things. Revelation 12:9, we all know that scripture probably by heart. It says that great [red] dragon, Satan the Devil, has deceived the whole world, and that includes us at one time. We have been awakened out of that deceit, but that is his job. Job number one for Satan the Devil is to deceive humankind and he will use any measure that he thinks appropriate, that he thinks will be efficient and will get you to turn at his disposal. And it is anything that he might use.

Notice in Genesis 3:1, the first words out of God's mouth, as it were, about this creature, about this being Satan the Devil, is "The serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field." That is the first description we get of Satan the Devil, that he is more subtle than anything you have ever met. You think you know a slick con man? Satan has got him by miles on being slick and deceptive. He is more subtle than any beast of the field.

This word subtle means cunning. The word is '*aruwm*' transliterated, and it means crafty. He is careful in the way he does evil. You know, we think of being careful in the way of doing what is right and good. Satan is careful in the way that he does evil and how he tries to get us to do evil. Another way to understand this word is that he is full of guile and malevolent. But not just malevolent. He is brilliant in his malevolence. There is no one smarter in being evil.

So, what does he do? Well, one of the big things that he does is that he makes his way, the bad way, the wrong way, the way we are not supposed to go, he makes it look good. He makes it appealing. He makes it attractive so that we are drawn to it while underneath it is foul and dark and destructive, and ultimately deadly. But it is *so* appealing because it could be *so* rewarding and *so* fulfilling, as we think of it in our deceived state. It just looks so good.

The principle that I am bringing out here from what we have already seen in Scripture and in *The Lord of the Rings'* little illustration I gave you, is be careful of things that look fair, those things that are fair but hide or disguise

the foulness and evil within. Because the fairness, the prettiness, the attractiveness is only a façade.

Let us go, if you will, to II Corinthians 11 and we will see that this principle is backed up in Scripture. We are going to read verses 3 through 4 and then we will jump down to 13 through 15. Paul says to this Corinthian church which, by the way, was in an area of the world a lot like ours today. It was a mercantile city. There were people coming from the West, people coming from the East, people coming from the North, people coming from the South.

The whole world seem to be converging on Corinth. It was right in the center of the Mediterranean. It was one of those places where people from all over came and mixed, whether it was religion, whether it was culture, whether it was sports, there were big games that took place right there in Corinth. And people brought their ideas from all over the world and the people in Corinth were battling this day by day. Whether it was sex, whether it was business practices, whether it was religious things that were brought in from the East, the North, the South, the West, whatever. They were dealing with it in Corinth because it was a huge meeting place of people. So Paul says to them,

II Corinthians 11:3-4 But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaching preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it.

What he is saying is, I see in you (these people in Corinth) that you glom on to new things, that you are very easy, you are pushovers in a way, or you could be, because you have got all these ideas that you have dealt with coming in all the time and you might be shell-shocked by it and easily accept it. You may not look into it enough, Paul says. Maybe he looks at them and says, well, you are innocent and you might just be totally snowed by these new ideas that come in. He says, I do not want that to happen. The doctrine of Jesus Christ, the gospel that He brought is simple. It is laid out very plainly. If you have the Holy Spirit, it is quite easy to grasp. He did not want them to be drawn away by other ideas that might be what they would think as more attractive, maybe even more intellectual, maybe more intellectually

pleasing, make them proud in their intellectual vanity to believe these things coming from another source, the source that was not of God.

So he is warning them: Look, you have got to be careful. These ideas are coming at you left, right, and center. You have to be able to be able to determine what is true and what is false. And I am afraid, he says, that Satan will be able to beguile you just like he did Eve, into accepting something wrong, false.

Let us go down to verse 13. Now he tells them why he is so concerned.

II Corinthians 11:13-15 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

What he tells them, he says, "I'm deathly afraid for you guys because Satan's agents look so attractive. They make themselves out to be ministers of light. (We heard in the sermon light is symbol of truth.) And so they say, they tell you that they are bringing you the truth, that they are servants of the truth. And then they tell you a lie. They look good, they look fair, but if you peer underneath the façade, they feel foul—they *are* foul!

Paul is telling us here that Satan continues to use this tactic. That he will give us something attractive as a lure and just draw us in until he has got us and he turns us away from what is true. And he says, we have got to be careful because the exterior of these people that Satan uses looks very much, if not an exact duplicate, of what God's servants look like. So you cannot be fooled by what you see on the outside. You have to dig deeper, you have to peel back the fairness to see whether the inside is fair or foul.

So these ministers of Satan, they look good, they speak well, they probably give wonderful first impressions. You would like to have that man as your next door neighbor. They dress well, they are people pleasers. But when you really sit down and think about what they are actually teaching, that is where you can begin to see chinks in their armor. When we begin to consider the

results of their instruction, when we take it beyond just the words that they are saying and into the area of practice, we can begin to see that it does not work. The product is not right. When we peel back the façade of their lives, their own personal lives, we see that their loyalties are revealed, what they are really out there for. Are they out there for money? Are they out there for fame? Are they out there for glory?

We also see, if we peel back the façade of their lives and look in and see that they are not actually keeping the truth, they are not practicing the truth. They have areas of their lives where they go with, let us say, abandon into wrong things, sins. So these, in the end, they look fair but they feel foul—and they are foul.

II Peter 2:1-3 But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies [notice that, secretly bring in destructive heresies], even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness [now, this gives us a clue of what is driving them] they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

God cannot stand these people, but He allows them to work. He allows them to come in and test His people. And it is basically a prophecy that these people will be showing up and we have to be on guard against them. And so Peter gives us a few words here of what we can look for beyond the pretty outside, pretty exterior. And among these ones are secretly bringing in heresies, they have destructive ways, meaning the fruits of these things are destructive, and the third one, as I mentioned before, is that their goal is *getting* things. It is covetousness. They want something other than the Kingdom of God. Usually they want something in this life that they lust after.

II Peter 2:12-19 But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. There are spots and blemishes,

carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin, beguiling unstable souls.

They have a heart trained in covetous practices and are accursed children. They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of righteousness [In this case, he is talking about someone who has a love of money and will sell himself to be a religious person and make gain by that.]; but he was rebuked for his iniquity; a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet.

These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom the gloom of darkness is reserved forever. For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness [there is nothing really in what they are saying], they allure through the lust of the flesh, through licentiousness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. While they promise them liberty [that is a big thing, they are promising liberty], they themselves are slaves of corruption, for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.

So we see here that Peter has given us a good long list of things to look for and not every one of these look fair, feel foul. People are going to have every one of these points, what would you call it characteristics, but there are things that we can look for. You know, things like eyes full of adultery or they beguile unstable souls. They go after the weak. That is what Satan does. He goes after the weak of the flock. This one about following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who was in it for the money and in it for the fame. Another one: wells without water, meaning they speak these great swelling words and it sounds, if you are not listening closely, like they are saying something really important, but they are really not. There is nothing good there, nothing that can satisfy truly like a good drink of water would.

These are things for us to understand and to just file away, to keep in our mind so that we can make correct judgments.

But let us go back to Isaiah 53 and see the counterpart. Jesus Christ, the one to whom we should compare both good and bad ministers. Let us just look at how He is described here in this prophecy.

Isaiah 53:1-2 Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.

He just comes as He is, you know, and He is not going to put on airs or make himself look special, especially not to deceive us. He is who he is. That is His name, is it not? "I am that I am."

Isaiah 53:3 He was despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

Jesus did not come with glitz and flash and you know, His own theme song. He came as He was and He spoke the truth and He did not rely on all these exterior type of things to attract people to His message. The truth was attractive enough and God of course, attracted the right people to Him. That is not saying that some of these things cannot be used. But we have to understand that when the person is using all these exterior things to get for himself and then underneath is empty or it is destructive, then there is a problem.

Let us go back a few more books here to the book of Proverbs, chapter 5. Let us start turning this just a bit to be a little bit more personal. Now, this chapter is a warning to the young man about the perils of adultery. But I want us to see how we can use this description of the prostitute to understand how she attracts this young man. So let us just read the first five verses. This is also in chapter 7, verses 21 through 23. Solomon felt it was important enough to include twice because we are easily deceived people and young men can easily be deceived by a pretty girl. And there are ways beyond this in terms of a principle that Satan and false ministers use to attract the gullible church member. So think of this in terms of principles.

Proverbs 5:1-5 My son, pay attention to my wisdom; lend your ear to my understanding, that you may preserve discretion, and that your lips may keep knowledge. For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey [honey is sweet, honey is something we like], and her mouth is smoother than oil [Another good attribute here, you know, to be able to speak. Well, she is using it for a wrong purpose.]; but in the end [meaning once you peel back the façade] she is bitter as wormwood [it is not sweet, just the opening lines are sweet, after you get into the the meat of it, as it were, it is bitter], sharp as a two-edged sword. [it is cutting, it is destructive] Her feet go down to death, her steps lay hold of hell [of the grave, that her purpose is not a good thing; she is leading this young man down the path of destruction and death and she is putting it on thick to get him to follow].

Now, we could go on and see more of this. I do not want to take the time to do that. I just kind of wanted to introduce the concept here, that both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament this principle is brought out; that we are going to be set upon by these people who look fair but feel foul. And we have to be able to recognize them and run away before they get their hooks in us. See them early, catch them early, and be able to put the hand out and say, hey, no further. I am not buying this at all. This does not jive with the truth.

The harlot in this particular passage, she looks fair. I mean, if you have ever seen a prostitute on the side of the road or seen them even in movies or whatnot, they always try to look attractive, seductive, alluring. They try to have something, some feature, something that they have made up, something that they emphasize to bring in the eye of a man and make him look again and draw, of course, him in to the point where he stops and starts a conversation and then it goes from there.

But we have to understand that under that makeup, under that smile, under that saucy attitude or whatever it happens to be, whatever she finds that works for her, she is no longer attractive. Peel that back and she feels foul. She *is* foul. And it is the same for all counterfeits. It does not matter what it is. A prostitute is trying to be a counterfeit wife. She is trying to be one flesh with a man, which is a pretty good definition of a marriage. And so she is

trying to counterfeit that relationship and she is trying to get in to it by that attractive outside. But the overall principle here is that while the lure is attractive, as Admiral Akbar would say in "Return of the Jedi," it is a trap. That is all it is.

In Proverbs 31:30 Solomon says, "Charm is deceitful," meaning it is a sham, it is baseless. That is what the Hebrew word is basically trying to convey, the charm is a sham. There is nothing to it. "And beauty is vain," is what he goes on to say, which means empty, ephemeral. There is nothing there. As my dad has described it in his Ecclesiastes sermons, it is the residue of a soap bubble that has popped. It is smoke, it is vapor, it is nothing.

So charm and beauty are nothing in terms of the truth, in terms of our goal, in terms of our hope. It is really neither here nor there. There is no intrinsic value in beauty like that or in charm. What we want is the truth. We have to look beyond the sizzle, as it were, and see what we are really being served.

We could say that the principle here is in terms of what we have gone over so far is, consider the end, consider the end of what it would be to have a relationship with such a person. Consider the end of the teaching that they are trying to get across, consider the end of how it is going to affect your relationship with Jesus Christ.

We have actually come to a conclusion which will take me the next 20 minutes. Let us go to James the first chapter. We are going to start in verse 14. Now this is the pathway of sin, some have called it. We could also call it the way to destroy yourself and die, to put it bluntly.

James 1:14-16 Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown [it has reached maturity], brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

We actually get ourselves in trouble because we always like to pursue anything that is shiny and pretty. We are like crows. Oh, there is something shiny over there. I am going to go over there and grab it and bring it back to my nest because it is so shiny and pretty—and it has no value, especially no value to the crow. Is he going to build his nest with some tiny thing? I have

seen them after Christmas when all the people have thrown their trees out, they are always around the tinsel and they take the tinsel back to their nest and they line their nests with tinsel. I guess it can be pretty to the crow's eyes. It is pretty, but it does not have, really, any value to that crow.

Often we do not even think about it. We just get attracted to something and we go. There is not even a thought that passes, whether this thing is good for us or not. It is like TV. You see things on TV and like, "Oh wow, that's kind of neat. I hadn't thought of that before." And we find ourselves an hour and a half later sitting there watching this movie or watching whatever show and we have wasted that time because it attracted us. But there was no intrinsic value in what we watched.

And it could be the same in many, many situations. We just let ourselves get attracted—the lust of the eye—and were drawn in and enticed and we have to be careful what our next steps are. If we do not put out the hands and say, "Stop! I'm not going any further!" then it goes to the next step. And it is when that deception that is being worked on us begins to mature and produce other things and we are starting along that pathway of sin. And we find out here in James 1 that it ends in death. It ends with being cut off from God. It ends in a very bad way.

Now, I am not saying that everything that is attractive is bad, and we are even allowed to be attracted to beautiful things. God made a lot of beautiful things, made them for us to enjoy. But we have always got to look beyond the beauty to the substance of a thing and especially the substance of people who are trying to teach you something that they claim is moral, like a preacher is trying to do. So we need to think when we are faced with something that we are attracted to, we have to think, is this thing that we are attracted to good for us, good for the church of God, good for the Kingdom of God?

Now the temptation will often cause us to go down the rabbit hole and it is all our fault because we have not been putting on the brakes. It is a weakness in human nature to leap before you look and just go because it feels right or it is like a hook in the lip and you are just drawn in and we do not fight. We just go, we just follow it. But we have to keep those blinders off and look at the whole thing and try to look beyond the beauty that we are attracted to

because if we keep on that dark path, it will destroy us and we will die. Not just physically. I am talking it can lead to spiritual death if we allow it.

This is the same process as we saw in II Corinthians 11. This is the same process that Satan used with Eve in the Garden. Why do not we just go there and read it. This is the process I have been describing.

Genesis 3:6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, . . .

She saw it. That was what was there. She saw it in her eye. "Oh, this is so beautiful and it looks like I can eat it. It's fruit. It's good for food." And it was very pleasant to the eye, it says, and she saw something in it beyond the fact that it was a fleshy, pretty fruit. She saw, because of what Satan the Devil told her in the previous five verses, that it was a tree desirable to make one wise. She could not have seen that. She could not have come to that conclusion. If she just looked on a piece of fruit and nobody had told her anything about it, she would just see that it was a piece of fruit and she would have known. Because she told Satan that she already knew that God said, do not eat that fruit. But Satan had changed her mind about that piece of fruit by saying here that,

Genesis 3:5 "For God knows that in the day you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

So she was ensnared by the lust of the eyes, the lust of her belly, and her own pride that she would be like God. She would make that great leap from being this fleshly woman to being equal to God Himself, knowing good and evil. So there was a moral quality that Satan put on it. That was different from the quality that God had said it represented and it drew her right in.

Genesis 3:6 . . . she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave her a husband with her, and he ate.

He even thought less than she did. "Hey, naked woman with a piece of fruit. Oh yeah, whatever you say!" That is all it took. He did not make one rational judgment about it. He simply took it and ate. So in many ways, she was

wiser than he was. She at least thought about it, even though she made a wrong decision. This shows how Adam completely forfeited his responsibilities that God had given him to lead.

I will just mention this and this is something that younger people are often deceived over. And I think it has really hit the Millennial generation in our time. One of the ways you can interpret what Eve felt about that fruit in its ability to make one wise, another way to put it is that she felt that the experience of eating this fruit would make her feel, make her be all grown up. Make her feel mature, make her feel like a real adult. And it was a deception. You know, it was getting at her pride to make her think that she was experienced enough, wise enough, to make this decision on her own. And it was the very thing that killed her.

And young people do this all the time. I am not saying just the Millennial generation. But they think, a lot of them out there in the world, they think they know more than everybody else and they think they have the experience and the education to make these decisions that they are making now, and it is killing them. So just another way to put it just to make you think a little bit about what was going on here. The result of doing this was cursing and death, bad things, very bad things.

Let us go to I Timothy 4 for our final scripture just so we understand what we are dealing with here and the timing of it.

I Timothy 4:1-2 Now the Spirit expressly says [this is directly from Jesus Christ through the Spirit of God] that in latter times [right now] some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscious seared with a hot iron.

What is being told us here by the apostle Paul is that things are ramping up, that the church of God has a target on its back. Satan and his demons are out to get us and they will stop at nothing. Their deception game is at the top, at its height right at the end and we will end up succumbing to it if we do not watch out, if we are not aware, if we do not know their game and turn it back on them. Meaning saying, "No, I won't have anything to do with it."

So these are my recommendations as we finish here. Think about what you are doing. First thing, think. When you come across something that looks fair, whether it is intellectually fair to you, intellectually attractive, whether it is physically attractive, whether it is emotionally attractive, we have to stop ourselves and think before we take a next step toward that thing. It may look fair. It may look wonderful and beautiful. But is it really? What is the end game here? What is it like underneath? Am I going to be addicted to it if I grab on to it? Will I not be able to let it go? Is it going to draw me to some place that I am not willing to go, but will it have the power over me to take me where I do not want to go?

There are lots of things that it could be. And I am not talking just sexual things that, that was just an illustration. It could be anything. It could be your love of collecting stamps if that is attractive to you. Is it going to take all your time so you become the great philatelist of all time, but you lose the Kingdom of God? We have to think about that. Not everything that is attractive is attractive to everybody in the same way. So we have to think about it. Is this thing that looks fair to us really fair? Or is it foul underneath?

You know these things sayings and there are good sayings. Our forefathers used them and they passed them down to us because they wanted to give us a little bit of common sense wisdom. So I have a few here.

1. "Don't judge a book by its cover." Now, this could go both ways. We have to look a little bit deeper. It could be a wonderful thing if we read a few pages in, look at the table of context, run through the index, check to see the author. We may find that it is a very good and uplifting thing. But it may be smut, it may be *Fifty Shades of Gray*, which is 50 shades of black, but they toned it down to gray so it is more attractive.

2. "Don't take any wooden nickels." Look out for counterfeits. That is what a wooden nickel is. It is something that is given to somebody who is unwary, who thinks he is getting five cents, but he is not. He is getting a plug, he is getting something that he cannot use. It has no value to purchase anything anymore. So, counterfeits are purposely designed to cheat. They are designed to cheat us out of something. The person who gives you a wooden nickel in exchange for your real-life nickel, he gets value. You get nothing. So you end up receiving something that is worthless and all you can do is throw it

away. That is the best thing you could do and learn the lesson, go on and not accept any more wooden nickels, but it would be far better if you had not accepted it in the first place. So watch out for counterfeits because they are out there in force in this day and age.

3. "Don't fall for the sales pitch." Now, what advertisers do when they give you a sales pitch is they puff up all the good qualities of their product and they may be good qualities, you know, makes your wash 50% brighter. But you know what they also do? They hide all the problems. They will not mention those things. "Use my cleanser here and it'll rot your skin off." They do not tell you that because you would not buy it. They just want you to see all the good things. "New and improved!" They will make their product clear so that it looks clean or they will make their packaging white so it looks good and pure. But it could be something that is going to kill you if you use it more than one time. You just never know.

So you have to look beyond the pitch, look beyond what the advocates are saying, and do your homework. Is it really good? Is this a good product? Should you buy this thing because it is actually a good value?

Another thing you need to be aware of is that marketers, the Kirby salesman, the vacuum salesman, or somebody when they come to your door, maybe selling encyclopedias or whatever, whoever the salesman is, they have a way, a method, where they get you agreeing to the things that they say. They get you to say yes and all they are trying to do is get their foot in the door so they can keep you saying yes and listen to the whole spiel. Do not say yes. Say, "Wait a second. I want to check into this myself." Just be careful.

Now, I hope you are thinking of these in terms of spiritual things rather than just the physical illustrations that I am giving you. For instance on this one, a slick speaker will get you going down the road agreeing with things that he says, and then he slips in something that is wrong and now you are already agreeing with it and you miss it. It just goes right past you. This is something, another one that is big today because we have got a glut of sex in this culture. This is a highly sexualized culture just like Corinth, just like Sodom and Gomorrah. So my next point, my next warning is,

4. "Don't be fooled by a nice pair of legs" because they sell everything with sex. You want a burger, they sell that with sex. They have been selling cars with sex for years. But sex is something that deceivers use to attract men, mostly. It works on women as well. And they get them to turn their heads. Sex is a primary tool of Satan the Devil and advertisers, Madison Avenue, they are on his bandwagon, using that same thing because it works! It sells! Millions and billions of dollars are wasted in this country because somebody was attracted by the lure of a pretty young woman or a handsome young man. Usually what they do is they get you to do something that you would not normally even think of doing. But because there is a sexual attraction, you leap before you look.

I am getting right to the end here. This is another one for the young people, but it works for all of us because we all have this thing. There is now a bucket list. Everybody has this bucket list of things that they want to do. And of course, it ranges from totally good and ordinary things to things that could be dangerous or things that one would not normally do if they were thinking straight. So my advice here is,

5. "Don't fall for the insanity of YOLO." You only live once. This is the idea out there that you should try everything once. What is the harm in it? You are only going to do it once, right? It is not going to hurt you if you do it just once. That is what you might call tempting God, putting your life out there on the line for something, I am not even going to mention anything because there might be things that you have thought of doing that are on your bucket list. But I would rather you go through your own bucket list and see whether that is something you actually should do. But these are things like deciding to take a dare that puts your life in danger. And of course, obviously, putting your spiritual life in danger would be even worse.

Another corollary to this idea or this principle is, do not do things just because everybody else is doing it. Your buddy comes up and says to you, "Hey, we're all going out on Friday evening. There's a great concert. You don't wanna miss it. They're not ever coming back. This is their final tour. You're going to miss it." So you have been given a lure of an evening of beautiful music, whatever it happens to be. I will just leave that to your own imagination. And it is something that you will never get a chance to see

again—but it is on the Sabbath. Are you going to take that step to do it, only once? But it shows a terrible weakness of character and Satan will exploit it once it is known. Just think about it.

I am done here. I am just going to sum up with basically one sentence or two sentences here. Before doing anything in which you are attracted by something that is good looking to you—and even those things that are not good looking—if you are presented with something new, some opportunity or what have you, ask yourself: Does this look fair but feel foul? Or does it look foul but feel fair? Ask yourself *those* questions.