

Part Two

Fall Meditations



Trick or Treat?

As a kid, one of my favorite times of the year was Halloween. Unlike today, there was still an innocent quality to the fright of the night. It was simply spooky and creepy fun, not a blood and gore horror show. The best part was being able to stay up a wee bit late and being outside in the dark.

All through the neighborhood you could hear the shuffling of dozens of little feet traipsing through the piles of leaves and their hyper-excited giggles in eager anticipation of their candy feasts. The costumes we wore, even when scary, were fun and non-toxic to our little psyches.

At each opened door, we all shouted in sing-song joyousness, "Trick or Treat!" Most of us didn't really understand what that meant; that if we left treatless we were supposed to play some sort of trick on that selfish household.

That realization only dawned as we got older. Even then, the worst of our tricks were scrawling silly sayings in soap on dark windows, or throwing some toilet paper over trees and bushes. Only the really mean kids threw eggs at houses.

While Halloween then was a happy hoot and safe, we didn't necessarily escape unscathed. What did us in was the candy. The night's take was usually more candy than we'd see the whole rest of the year. And it was all ours! We didn't even wait to get home to start eating it. As fast as we could get the wrappers off, we'd pop in nougats and

mini-chocolate bars and malt balls and on and on.

Even the most clever and diligent mother could not accurately monitor our candy intake at Halloween. Neither they nor we knew the full extent of the damage until the next day as our stomachs turned and we ran to the bathroom, yielding up much of our treasure to the toilet, one way or another. Treats? Or tricked?

Whichever, we always made a full recovery.

Satan is a master trickster who parades as the giver of treats. We are all prone to sin. Every one of us. Sin is in our skin. You could say we are possessed by the flesh. And every sin that tempts us initially always looks like a succulent, innocent treat. Especially the "little" sins we bump up against and say, "Just this one time. It's no big deal."

We forget that even poison can taste good going down. It's what happens once it's inside us that does the damage. And so it is with sin. Satan's goal is to "steal and kill and destroy" (John 10:10).

A trick Satan uses to make his sin-treats seem safe is hiding the consequences. We never see them until it's too late. The "treat" so engages our desires, there's no room in our heads to consider anything beyond getting it unwrapped and popped into us as quickly as possible. And it does taste really good.

Sin usually feels fun, which is also part of the trick. The catch is that sin always bites back, sooner or later. Sin leads to total spiritual death (Romans 6:16). Sin, untreated and unforgiven, offers no possibility of recovery, and leads straight to hell. Period.

Jesus, on the other hand, offers treats with no tricks. But they don't look like treats on the surface. For instance, you can have eternal life by accepting Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. It's His favorite free treat to hand out. Once you accept Him, then He calls you to live for Him.

This requires servanthood, self-sacrifice, daily washing of the inner self by reading the Word of God which is the Bible, and a few other lifestyle disciplines. All of these are also treats, but it's sometimes hard to see that. They don't necessarily taste good going down, but once they're in you the results are all eternally positive. They yield true joy, peace, and fullness of life (Romans 6:23, John 10:10).

Most importantly, living a Christ-like life is the only way to recover from the tricks of the Tempter's deadly treats. Jesus is the only antidote to sin. Period.

Trick? Or treat? It's your choice.

"The thief [Satan] comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that [you] may have life, and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:10-11).

Wound

to write
too deep
is to wound
the soul
with a wound
that will not heal
but
only grow...

Some

THE light fades.

The air cools.

Most go in

To the arms of another.

Some just go in.

Some just go.