

Beautiful Death-traps

During the beautiful summery weather of early September it was a breathtaking spectacle to go out early on a number of mornings while the sun was still low and see the hundreds of spider webs in the long grass highlighted by the sun. The sparkle of dew drops made the webs look exquisitely beautiful. So much so that I could not help getting the camera out and trying to capture that beauty on one of these mornings.

Looking out over that silvery gossamer wonderland it was all too easy to forget that these beautiful, delicate webs were actually designed as death-traps. Each one of them was spun so as to ensnare victims; insects which the spider could kill and devour. The webs were all different shapes and sizes and placed at all kinds of different angles and heights; but they were all alike in their purpose. They were beautiful death-traps.

Like many other phenomena of the natural world these webs illustrate a number of important moral and spiritual truths for us.

Firstly, they remind us that ***outward beauty is no guarantee of moral safety***. There is such a thing as the "pleasures" of sin, as the Bible states. Many aspects of sin are pleasurable. Our doing wrong is gratifying to our own inherent sinful desires and lusts, and measured only by such a standard sinning feels good, enjoyable and worth it. Like the webs in the sunshine, adultery, sex outwith marriage, retaliation, revenge and covetousness all appear legitimate and beautiful if seen only by the light of our own sinful minds. By comparison Bible reading, church attendance, prayer, holiness and obedience to Christ seem dull and unexciting.

But just as there are "pleasures" in sin so too there is a "deceitfulness" about sin. Much of the apparent beauty of sin is really just a distraction from its deadliness. Like the gossamer web, the foxglove, or the rattlesnake's tail, sin's pleasure is but a fatal attraction. Beauty hides the poison lurking behind the attractiveness.

Secondly, ***we need light so as to see the death-traps of sin***. Without the sun, low down in the early morning, it would be very difficult to see these hundreds of webs. Later, with the sun higher in the sky, it was difficult to realise that they were there at all. So it is with the spiritual and moral issues of life. We require the light of God's word, the truth of Scripture, the rays of the Bible to let us see the death-traps that sin and Satan place in our way. The more familiar we are with the teaching of the Bible the more we are able to pick our way through these pitfalls and dangers, avoiding the death-traps as we go. This is why we find the psalmist saying, *"If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction. I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life."* (Psalm 119 v 92-93)

For many people the great problem is that they do not realise that such things as sinful actions and relationships are death-traps, if we believe God's point of view. Too many have little or no knowledge of the Bible, hardly ever refer to its teaching, care nothing about coming to church to hear its message explained, and so are oblivious to the webs of sin all around. At the same time the church cannot claim to be inexcusable in this. Lack of unity and cooperation in the gospel stiffens the resolve of those who oppose the gospel, while lack of enthusiasm and zeal in evangelism leaves many entangled in the strands of sin. *"Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven."* (Matthew 5 v 16)

The third thought arising from this scene of nature is that ***to remove the danger it is not enough to remove the webs themselves***. Supposing one had a passionate concern that no more insects be caught in these silvery death-traps, going through the fields removing all the webs would not be enough to protect them. The webs would all be back next morning! To eradicate the death-traps would require killing all the spiders!



The point is that we must deal with sin at its source, not merely in the symptoms. The Lord has given Satan his death blow by his death on the cross and his resurrection from the dead. Satan is a defeated enemy, yet in a vehement zeal in his death throes he still spins his deadly webs. And more, sin still lives in our human hearts. Yet that's where we need to destroy it. How?

By coming to Christ, by putting our entire life into his hands, by trusting in him and accepting him and so receiving his power to work against sin. *"If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free....Truly, truly I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin....So if the Son sets you free you will be free indeed."* (John 8 v 31-36)

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