Beware the Rutted Road

Joe plays fast and loose with the hearts of young women. He's a confirmed cad now, but he wasn't always. The success of his early, seemingly harmless flirtations started him down the wrong path. He soon grew proud of his ability to charm the female sex. Then, to further feed his vanity, he began a cruel game – deliberately trying to induce a series of women to fall in love with him. The more challenging the case, the more determined to win he became.

Finally, though, Joe got caught in his own trap, accidentally falling in love with one of his intended victims. In hopes of a real relationship with her, he sincerely tried to change his ways. But his dissolute habits were too deeply entrenched. Just when he was making real progress with the lady, he ruined everything because he couldn't resist the temptation to prove he could seduce one of his former conquests a second time. Joe won the challenge but lost the prize.

A sad story, and it reminds me of a sage saying I've heard: *Sin will take you farther than you ever thought you would go. Sin will keep you longer than you ever thought you would stay. And sin will cost you more than you ever thought you would pay.* It cost Joe the love of his life, not to mention what it cost all his victims along the way.

Beware; sin is habit forming and often progressive, moving from bad to worse over time if not nipped in the bud. Just like the ruts in a dirt road become deeper the more often it's traveled, so the more entrenched a transgression becomes with repetition, until it's nearly impossible to break out and steer onto a different path. And yet there is hope.

> *No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.* (1 Corinthians 10:12-13)

Joe was provided a very literal way to escape the temptation presented by his old paramour: a planned trip out of town. How different the outcome might have been if he had only taken it!

Are you stuck in an ugly rut, caught in the grip of some habitual sin? God wants to free you! He is not so far removed that he doesn't understand our weaknesses or the nature of temptation (Hebrews 4:15-16). With God's help and small steps taken consistently in the right direction, old habits can be unlearned, replaced with new. Godly habits strengthen by repetition too! So look for His way of escape, and leave the rutted road behind.

S. Johnson