

The Power of Advertisement

I. Introduction

Have you thought that advertisement has power? It has power to persuade people to do certain action. Usually to buy something. Think with me. You did not need this thing and your life was just fine without it. But then you opened a newspaper or a magazine. Maybe you turned on the radio or TV. Perhaps you logged onto the internet just to check your e-mails. Or you simply opened your eyes and looked around. And there it was! The advertisement that persuaded you to buy the thing.

Advertisements have flooded the world. Businesses, state institutions, schools, clubs, individuals, churches - they all advertise one thing or another. Often the advertisement is visual – ads, posters, billboards, shop window displays. Sometimes the advertisement consists of audio messages like on the radio or phone. TV uses audio-visual advertisement. Some salesmen use personal advertisement. The goal of advertisement is to persuade you to buy the advertised product or service. And advertisement really works! If it did not work, why would there be so much of it? Why would advertisers spend so much money on it? Besides, think about how much stuff you have because you saw or heard an advertisement which persuaded you to buy something. Also think how much of the stuff you really need and use regularly.

Advertisement works, but some advertisers use sinful practices in their advertisements. They lie, play on emotions, appeal to desires of the flesh and ego, put people under pressure, even threaten them, simply manipulate them to persuade them to buy the advertised product or service.

Infamous in the Czech Republic are sales presentations at which people are baited on the promise of a free meal, after which would follow a short presentation of products with the opportunity to buy them. Organizers of these sales presentations manipulate people until they sign contracts for some expensive set of pots or whatever else. Especially old people are easy prey to them. They come for a free meal worthy of several USD and leave with obligation to pay thousands of USD for something they would never buy under regular circumstances.

Some other salesmen in the Czech Republic promise people something for free and ask them to sign a paper about which they lie and tell them that it is some kind of registration form or permission to send them information about other products or services. Later, these naive people who signed the paper, without even reading it, receive a bill for a large sum of money for a membership in some club or whatever they signed for.

Advertisement does work and some advertisers use sinful practices in their advertisements of products or services. There are numerous examples of it in everyday life. Even worse is the advertisement of sin. For although it is common that products and services are advertised, sin can and is advertised as well.

II. Advertisement of sin

The first advertiser of sin was the devil, who invaded the garden of Eden, which was then the home of Adam and Eve. Let's look at the devil's techniques of advertising sin:

Ge 3:1 ¶ Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made.

And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

2 And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of 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 hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil.

Let's notice that the devil began his advertisement of sin with a **lie** and **appeal to the desire of the flesh**:

v. 1: Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

Following Eve's response about God forbidding them to eat from the tree in the midst of the garden under penalty of death, the devil continued his advertisement of sin with **another lie**:

v. 4: Ye shall not surely die: - By which he also called God a liar.

Immediately, the devil continued his advertisement of sin with an **appeal to the desire of the ego**:

v. 5: ye shall be as God

Lies, appeals to desires of the flesh and ego are among the techniques of the devil's advertising of sin. The devil invented them and they entered the world. The great temptation connected with the advertisement of sin is that often one can have the advertised sin almost immediately, and the only price for the sin may be just giving up something that one cannot even see – a good conscience before God.

III.

Advertisement of sin is the path to sin

Prior to sin

The truth is that advertisement of sin is the path to sin. Let's consider the situation prior to the first sin. Eve knew God forbade them to eat fruit from this particular tree. What happened to her? Why did she decide to believe a creature instead of the Creator who created her, provided her with a husband, all necessities of life, good environment and instructions on how to live life in order to please Him?

Ge 3:6 ¶ And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

Sawing that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, that it was a tree to be desired to make one wise, were not mere thoughts that crossed Eve's mind. These were lusts of the flesh, lust of the eyes and lust of the ego that preceded sin.

Why did Eve readily exchanged sin for her good conscience before God? Because she let the devil, with his lies and appeals to her desires, wake up lusts in her. She let these lusts grow into a determination to sin, followed by the action of sin, which brought her spiritual death.

Jas 1:13 ¶ Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

Both she and her husband, Adam, ate the fruit, and both committed sin.

After sin

Now, let's consider situation after the first sin. Sin changed their lives, but not in the way they expected. Instead of learning from God what is good and evil in God's sight in due time, by their sin they took a prohibited shortcut to the direct knowledge of good and evil, without God's guidance.

The first evil they were aware of was that they were naked and it was good to cover the nakedness. Though without God's guidance, they did not know how to do it properly (Ge 3:7, 21). Another evil they recognized was that they had lost the relationship with God they used to have prior to sinning. Before they had fellowship with God, but now, they were afraid of Him and they hid themselves from Him (Ge 3:8-10). Another evil of which they were aware was that the serpent – the devil deceived them. (Ge 3:13).

When God required them to give an account for what they did, Adam simply blamed it on the woman that God gave him, while Eve blamed it on the serpent – the devil (Ge 3:11-13). Now, they knew the evil of sin, but they did not know what to do about it in order to reestablish their relationship with God. God would have to teach them repentance. Yet, repentance would not be enough.

Right here at the judgment scene God, out of His great love and mercy, put in place His plan of salvation for people gone astray in sin, that was thousands of years later fulfilled in Christ:

Ge 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Then God pronounced judgment over the people guilty of sin:

- sorrows and submission to her husband for Eve (Ge 3:16).
- sorrow, hardships, and death for Adam (Ge 3:17-19).

At the beginning of this chain reaction was the devil's advertisement of sin. Advertisement of sin is the path to sin. Once you get on it, you get yourselves on the path to hell.

IV.

The way out from the power of sin

Now, what is the way out from the power of sin and its consequences – separation from God and ultimately hell? I will deal with it shortly, but first let me say that devil is not the only advertiser of sin.

Many people who live sinful lives advertise sin – drug or alcohol abuse; sex outside of marriage; homosexuality; pornography; irreverence to God, parents, or authorities; rudeness; selfishness. This is typically the message of creators of modern movies, music and literature. This is also the message of modern education that denies God and mocks the belief in God. By this it removes moral restraints in students whose faith was shattered. Finally, it is also the message of godless individuals. By the way they dress, speak, and act, they advertise their perverted value system. Whole societies are soaked with advertisements of sin.

We live in the midst of these societies. We used to let ourselves to be influenced by their advertisements of sin. We too committed sins and were separated from God. But thanks to God's mercy and love, we were saved from His wrath by Jesus Christ:

Eph 2:1 ¶ And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;
2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:
3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.
4 ¶ But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,
5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)
6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

Advertisement of sin is the path to sin. The only way out from the power of sin by which one is trapped is the way provided by God in His mercy and love. It is to die to sin with Christ through the waters of baptism and to rise up with Christ to a new life for God:

Ro 6:3 Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?
4 We were buried therefore with him through baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life.
5 For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection;
6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin;
7 for he that hath died is justified from sin.
8 But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him;
9 knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death no more hath dominion over him.
10 For the death that he died, he died unto sin once: but the life that he liveth, he liveth unto God.
11 Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus.
12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof:
13 neither present your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

Col 2:12 having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

As Christians we have God's grace and love and spiritual help, but they work only with our self-control and continuous obedience to God's word:

Tit 2:11 For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men,
12 instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world;
13 looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;
14 who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works.

V. What is the lesson for us?

What is the lesson for us? We live in the age of advertisements. We live in the age of modern information technologies. Both of these are powerful tools. Through modern information technologies, advertisements have invaded the privacy of our homes. This includes the advertisements of sin. Think about it, advertisements of sin have invaded the homes of Christians who have died to sin! Through advertisements of sin, the devil is knocking at the doors of Christian's hearts in their homes, asking them: "let me in". Temptation is great, and often sin is just a click away.

While exposing ourselves to the advertisements of products and services through media may be unfortunate and economically unwise, if it is not connected with sin, it will not cost us eternal life. It will only cost us money that we spend and space that we clutter when we let advertisements to persuade us to buy some more stuff. The easy solution to this problem is cutting off as much advertisements of products and services as possible from our life.

However, exposing ourselves to the advertisements of sin is mere foolishness. If we have died to sin, we do not need to dwell on lies. We do not need to feed desires of our flesh and ego and cultivate lust for sin by exposing ourselves to the advertisements of sin. We do not need to let idea of sin to enter into our hearts through our perceptions that are employed by the advertisements of sin. One cannot win this game, because it is not a game, but a spiritual battle with the devil and his powers of evil.

Eph 6:12 For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

One example. From time to time I hear about men, even Christians, even married Christians, who have a problem with pornography. There is lots of pornography and advertisements of it, especially on TV and the internet. Advertisements of pornography are advertisements of lies that stir up desires of flesh and ego and wake up lust for sin. Pornography is sinful. It is addictive just like alcohol or drugs. It destroys people's life. It destroys their marriages. It destroys their spiritual life and relationship with God. It is just a click away in secret in the privacy of homes, even Christian homes. I do not know much about these men. I heard that some of them had problems with pornography prior to their marriages and it ruined their marriages. However, if a Christian man resorted to pornography after he got married to a Christian woman, it would be truly sad. A Christian husband and wife are a team sanctified by God to help each other on the first place to go to heaven, but also satisfy their needs and bring up children in the Lord. If they work as a team, the devil should not have much chance with them, because they will beat him as a team with God's help – that is by trusting God, obeying His Word and praying to Him. If this team does not work, if one or both of them are selfish, giving priorities to whatever else, but not to one another, then they expose one another to whatever sin, including the sin of pornography.

While adult Christians should have trained themselves and cultivated their sense of self control, children are yet in the beginning of this process of being trained for self-control. I read the other day on the internet that many children in the Czech Republic have TV's in their rooms. They also have access to the internet. I suppose it is like that in the USA as well. I am sorry for these children. They are exposed to the advertisements of sin and are just a click away from sin. Parents are foolish to put their trust in children that they would not watch or download what they should not. I hope that Christian parents are smarter than that.

VI.

What can we do about advertisements of sin?

What can we do about advertisements of sin? One thing we can do about it is to cut it out from our lives and the lives of our family as much as possible. For instance, our family does not have a TV. We do not expose our children neither to advertisements of sin, nor advertisements of whatever else, especially of sweets, unhealthy snacks, sweet beverages, newest toys, brand cloths, computer games, all kinds of digital devices, etc., that are so oft on TV aiming at children in effort to generate profits and raise up a new generation of materialistic consumers for the advertisers. Instead of watching TV, we spend time together playing games and learning something new, like reading, writing, counting, Bible stories, cooking, crafts, etc.

We have a radio, but we rarely listen to it and mostly news. We neither subscribe, nor buy any newspapers or magazines.

We have only one computer that is accessible to all family. No one has any exclusive rights to it. Internet browser keeps memory of directory of visited web pages. Anybody can check it out.

Our children listen to music, watch DVD movies for children only, and read books, play educational computer games, that we as parents chose or approve. We give them guidance so that they will know what is good and evil in the books, movies, games, based on God's guidelines that are in the Bible. Our children have access to the internet only with at least one of parents and most of the time we look at short movies from the lives of animals.

Another thing we can do is to get busy working, taking care of our family, working for the Lord, sharing the gospel with lost people, and helping other people. There is much good one can do. The more busy we are while doing good things, the less time we have to pay attention to the advertisements of sin, or any advertisements for that matter. When we do what is right in God's sight, we are advertising to the world something great about our relationship with God. That we are saved! On the other hand, if we freely miss worship services, wear very casual clothes to worship services, our spirit is absent in worship, etc., we are also advertising to the world something about our relationship to God. That we have a lack of commitment to God. Children will notice it and imitate it. And guess which of the two types of Christians is more likely to be prone to the advertisements of sin? The one committed to the Lord or the one with lack of commitment?

The most helpful thing, however, is to be grateful to God for the great things He has done for us. What are some of these great things? He saved our soul. He forgave as our sins. He made us alive. Set us free from slavery of sin. He pardoned us instead of punishing us. He keeps providing us with all that we need for our physical and spiritual life. He gave us His Word with a manual how to live our life and be happy. He gives us comfort in difficult times. He hears and answers our prayers. He offers us

eternal life with Him in heaven, etc. We should appreciate these great things so much that we would not want to lose a good conscience before God, which He gave us in Christ when we obeyed gospel:

1Pe 3:18 Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;

21 which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ;

VII. Invitation

If you are trapped in sin, the only way out from its power and death is to become a Christian. That is possible by believing that Jesus is the Son of God who died on the cross for your sins and rose from death, and that He is your Savior and Lord. Further you must repent of your sins, confess Jesus as your Lord, and be baptized by immersion under water for the remission of your sins. If you are willing to do so, come to the front while we sing the song of invitation.

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