

## *The Deceitfulness Of Sin (#2)*

Joe Slater

Sin deceives us by wearing the mask of a servant to disguise its true nature as a cruel taskmaster. But Satan has even more tricks up his sleeve. Sin also presents itself as something attractive rather than ugly. The forbidden fruit in Eden looked “*good for food*” and “*pleasant to the eyes*” (Genesis 3:6). Our first parents realized the true destructive nature of sin only after they had yielded to its deceitfulness.

An urban legend claims that during a sanitation workers strike, some citizens of New York City got rid of their garbage by gift-wrapping it and putting the packages in unlocked cars. Thieves unwittingly became trash collectors!

Like the shrewd citizens of New York City, Satan is a talented gift-wrap artist. He knows just how to make ugly garbage (sin) look like a lovely present. Beyond all doubt, sin can be pleasant – even fun! We must discern carefully lest we fall victim to his deception.

More extreme than masquerading as a servant or even something pleasant, sin deceives us by appearing to be right. “*There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death*” (Prov. 16:25). Saul of Tarsus sincerely believed he was doing the will of God as he attempted to destroy the Lord’s church. Sin looked right to him. Radical Muslims who torture, rape, and murder those they call “infidels” may feel certain such deeds are not sinful, but “good.” Countless professing Christians teach and practice things they sincerely believe are “good,” not realizing those things are contrary to the word of God.

Yes, sin is deceitful! And the best defense is a good offense. “*Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You*” (Psalm 119:11).

## **What Is Central?**

“*For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified*” (1 Corinthians 2:2, ESV).

What is truly central to our faith? What is the real goal of our participation in the work and worship of the church?

I heard of two brothers who owned a lumberyard in a highly religious southern town. Supposedly the two brothers talked it over and decided that if they each would join a church, their business might benefit. One of them joined the Baptists (the largest church in town), and the other joined the Church of Christ (since it was the next largest church). Their religion was really the love of money.

Many people practice a religion because they do not want to be eternally lost. Salvation, I admit, is a wonderful serendipity of the faith. But if our own salvation is our only reason for worship, we are serving ourselves, not God. In that case our religion is really a disguised form of selfishness.

We need to shun any form of religion that places us at the center. Christian worship must glorify God. Christian teaching must center on Christ – the real Christ of Calvary, not the phony Christ of the prosperity gospel. We do not have a “personal savior” who exists to make us happy. We serve an all-powerful Lord whose goal is our holiness before our happiness.

Ian Hamilton wrote, “The ultimate tragedy of sin is not that it spoils my life, disrupts my relationships, scars my world, but that it dishonors, defies and disgraces my God” (The Faith Shaped Life, p. 66). This is true. And because it is true, a religion that winks at sin is of no value, and certainly cannot rightly be called “Christian.”

I am sorry if you do not like this. I am even more sorry that I do not like it. We may not like it, but it is a

truth we need to face. “...he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness” (Heb 12:10, ESV). We must therefore, “Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14, ESV), “for our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:29).

May his fire burn within us now, so that our sin may be consumed, and our lives may honor him as they should. Accepting his consuming fire now is the only way to honor him, and the only escape from the eternal fire that has been prepared for those in rebellion against him.

--Thayer Salisbury (Toledo, OH)

x x x x x x x x x

## **Just Be There**

Job’s three friends were a comfort to him for a full week. They were silent, but they were there (2:3). When they spoke, they were “*worthless physicians*” (13:4) and “*miserable comforters*” (16:2).

A little girl was “adopted” as a grandchild by the couple next door. The wife died, and the girl went over and sat outside with the old man for a couple of hours. When she returned home, her mother asked, “What did you say to him?” “Nothing,” she said. “I just sat with him and helped him cry.”

When death or other tragedies occur, often there are no appropriate words to say. To be of genuine comfort, just be there.

--Cecil May (via *Preacher Talk*)

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^

*Be thankful that God said “be faithful,” and that He did not say, “Be flawless.” Walk in the light, and there is no condemnation. Therefore, rejoice!*

--Bill Boyd (via Facebook)