

The Deceitful Nature of Sin

“Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith: examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you- unless indeed you fail the test?” 2Cor.13:5. Paul is suggesting, to those who were challenging him and his apostolic authority, cf. 2Cor.13:2-3, that their efforts would be better expended on *self-examination*, since he and other inspired apostles/preachers did *“not fail the test”* themselves, 2Cor.13:6. But such underscores a difficulty with which we humans seem to universally struggle: *Accurate self-examination*. Jesus points out this hyperopia (seeing *far* but not *near*) Matt.7:3-5 where the *“speck”* or *“splinter”* in someone else’s eye is more easily seen than the *“log”* or *“beam”* that is our own eye. To further illustrate the problem...

Consider a question: **“Do you think you’re vain?”** Please bear with me and think sincerely about this for a moment. After giving that some serious thought, consider the next query: **“Do you think vain people typically think they’re vain?”**

Vanity, though certainly enough of a problem on its own, is not really the point. The questions could be concerning narcissism, pride, truthfulness, etc. etc. just as easily as vanity. But what those questions simply highlight are two significant issues:

- The **Deceptive/Deceitful Nature of Sin**; Heb.3:13 clearly indicates that we can be *“hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”* If I understand it, this means that sin, by its very nature, attempts to deceive us into believing it *“isn’t really bad”*- that it is not actually *“sinful,”* or at least is not so for us/you. Then, through the continual repetition of this lie, which we adopt and repeat even to ourselves, we come to believe it... and thus become *“hardened”* or *calloused* (unfeeling) toward our own iniquity. Paul put this way in 1Tim.4:1-3, *“But the Spirit explicitly says that in the latter times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own consciences as with a branding iron...”* 1Tim.4:1-2. The second significant issue that is emphasized relative to *the deceitfulness of sin* is,
- The **Power of Our Minds to Deceive and Delude Us into Denying Reality**. Through the reception and repeated regurgitation of the afore mentioned lie (that *sin* is not really *“sinful,”* or at least is not so for *“me in my situation”*), we enter that category of those *“who delude themselves,”* Jas.1:22. We may even read of *“sin”* in that mirror of the soul, *“the perfect law of liberty,”* but the reflection we see is either *distorted* or quickly *dismissed* just as Jas.1:23-24 describes, *“he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.”*

The answer to both of our questions about *“vanity”* was probably, *“No.”* But herein lay the problem: The **deceitful nature of sin not only allows but encourages us to delude ourselves into denying the reality of our sinfulness**. Pray, as I often do, *“God help me to see myself as You see me.”* If sincere, this entreaty not only seeks truth and clarity regarding *“self,”* but also reminds me of the worth God places on my soul- which He considered worth the redemptive price paid through the sacrifice of His beloved Son.

Sin is, by its very nature, **deceitful**. So, *“Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren,”* Jas.1:16. Vigilance is definitely required. Remember that the parable of the condemned Pharisee in Luke 18:10-14 was given to those who those who *“trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt,”* v.9. (Philip C. Strong; Viking Drive Church of Christ; 3791 Viking Drive, Bossier City, LA; online at vikingdrivechurchofchrist.com; email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)