

Are you and I deceived, by sin? Do we know others who are?

We may be a Christian, yes, and we have been born again, yes, we may even have been filled with the Holy Spirit for a season, but the question is, are we now deceived by sin?

Heb 3:13 (Written to Christians) **But exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.**

As Christians, when we make allowance for sin in our lives, the above scripture warns us that sin is very deceitful. This means we are probably now under some form of deception, that our thinking is probably wrong in some areas relative to God and that we probably don't know it. The very fact that we are casual about sin, or excuse or justify it, or assume there it can't be overcome, or there's no consequence to it, or that a few good deeds will offset it, is evidence enough that we are deceived, isn't it? Why is this so plainly the case?

Because even though we may wink at sin, the truth is God can't tolerate the slightest sin:

Isa 59:2 **But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.**

Ezek 18:20 **The soul who sins shall die** (to God)...(and needs to be made alive again)

Ps 5:4 NLT **O God...you cannot tolerate the slightest sin** (so why are we tolerating it?)

This is why the whole ministry of Jesus Christ was directed toward this sin issue, and to make provision for delivering each one of us from the penalty and the power of sin; and, thereby from the inevitable deceptions that cloud our thinking when we still tolerate sin:

Matt 1:21 **...You shall call His name Jesus for He will save His people from their sins.**

John 1:29 **...Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!**

1 John 3:5 **And you know that He (Jesus) was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. Whoever lives in Him (Christ) does not sin...**

We are only acceptable to God when we are living in Christ, the beloved. And whoever is living in Christ does not sin. And yet many of us Christians, we're not talking about the world here who don't yet know any better, are turning a blind eye to both our own sin and to the sins of other Christians. How much more deceived, by sin, could we be?

Eph 1:6 **...He (God) made us accepted in the Beloved** (living "in Christ" not sinning).

What are some of the most common deceptions of sin evident among us Christians?

1. The Christian, maybe religious but not currently walking with God, who thinks: "I'm basically a 'good person' I'm not aware of any glaring sin in my life such as murder and the like". Is that so? The deception here is that we invent our own definition of what we think sin is and which bears no resemblance to what God says in fact it is:

(i) 1 Jo 3:4 **...Sin is the transgression (breaking) of the law...** Christians not being

led by the Holy Spirit are under the Law (Gal 5:18). Do we know the 10 commandments? What are the first three? Do we know where to find them in our Bibles?

Gal 5:18 **If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law** (if not, you are).

- (ii) Rom 14:23 ...**For whatever does not originate and proceed from faith is sin; whatever is done without a conviction of its approval by God is sinful.** AMP
- (iii) Ro 6:16 ...**You are that one's slaves whom you obey whether of sin** (disobedience to God) **with death** (to God), **or of obedience** (to God) **with righteousness.** Are we submitted to God, led by God's Spirit, and obeying God in everything, or is self-will still the Lord of our life and not Christ? Are we born-again but living in sin?
- (iv) 1 Jo 5:17 **All unrighteousness is sin**...Are all our words and actions righteous? Jesus said all His decisions were righteous because He sought God's will (Jo 5:30).
- (v) Jam 4:17 ...**To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.**

Here is the deception of sin, despite these five definitions by God of sin, many Christians while violating them all, cling to our own self-serving definition and falsely think we're OK.

- 2. The Christian who says "Well, you know God forgives sin and the Bible says His mercy endures forever. So how can I be in trouble?" Yes, Jesus died both for our sins to purchase our pardon, and to our sin nature to free us from sin's power. But those who are deceived overlook God's specific requirements to receive His mercy:

Prov 28:13 **He who covers his sins will not prosper, whoever confesses them** (admits them sorrowfully to God) **and forsakes them will have mercy.**

Acts 8:22 **Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you.**

Ps 103:17 **But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting On those who fear Him**... Do we live in constant reverence, love and obedience toward God in all that we do? So He can have mercy on us?

There is no forgiveness without repentance and forsaking of sin. There is no mercy if we don't intend to live henceforth in submission to God. All else is just deception.

- 3. The Christian who thinks to himself "Well, most of the people I know are living pretty much the same as I do, or worse, and none of us has been struck dead yet. Surely a God of love won't send any of us to hell because we don't quite measure up." When we are deceived we will try and take false comfort in the fact that most others are like us. But that simply means that they too are as deceived as we are:

1 Jo 5:19 ...**The whole world lies under the influence of the wicked one.**

Rev 12:9 ...**Called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world...**

2 Cor 11:3 **But I fear, lest...as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.**

Throughout history rarely has the crowd been with God, usually only a remnant. Today, every person, whether unconverted or born-again, who isn't currently walking in submission to Christ, feeding daily on His words and being actively led by the Holy Spirit, has been seduced, deceived and duped in their thought lives. And they won't know it unless they open the door of their hearts to God's truth.

Three are examples of how, as William Law said, our natural reason opposes the Spirit.

What then is the mission and purpose of the true disciples of Christ to those deceived?

Surely it is this, with a meek hearing heart and under God's direction, to un-deceive and correct the wrong thinking of both the unconverted and carnal Christians – that is Christians who are living, like the world, by sense and reason without the Holy Spirit.

Rom 8:6 AMP Now the mind of the flesh, which is sense and reason without the Holy Spirit, is death (to God), comprising all the miseries arising from sin, here and hereafter. But the mind of the Holy Spirit is life and peace, both now and forever.

So how do we help them? By praying for them and patiently endeavoring to teach them:

- To repent of and forsake their sins in order to be re-lived and re-reconciled to God;
- That they are opposing themselves and have become captive to Satan's thoughts;
- The truth of God's words, in love, which is the only antidote to sin's deceptions;
- To receive the Holy Spirit, again, so He can resume leading them as God's children;
- To return to a love for the truth of God's words to stay free from future deceptions;
- How to capture reasoning self-justifying thoughts by God's words made alive in them.

Col 2:4-8 Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words...As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord (by child like faith in God's words), so walk in Him (by continuing to believe more of God's words)...

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the traditions of men (and often religious traditions), according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

The disciple of Christ actively involved in rescuing both the unconverted and carnal Christians from the deceptions of sin, will doubtless encounter some inevitable "Yes, buts". One of these is the perception that there are no real consequences to being casual about sin. No consequences? How about sin's immediate loss of the peace, joy, love and righteousness of and the very presence of God? How about being dead to God because of sin, unable to see or know Him, but, being of the Devil are headed for his destination?

Heb 2:2-3 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation...

Heb 10:26 For if we sin willfully (disobey God) after we have received the knowledge of the truth (and don't repent), there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

1 Jo 3:6-8 **Whoever lives in Him (Christ) does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him (from the time he sinned) **let no one deceive you...He who sins is of (belongs to) the devil...For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil** (destroy sin in us).**

Heb 10:29 **Of how much worse punishment...will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?**

There are horrendous consequences if a Christian is casual about sin. They are simply deceived and their thoughts are those that the devil wants them to think. Sadly the devil can feed those thoughts through false cheap-grace teaching about sin on Christian TV.

God is love; God doesn't change. He was love in the days of Noah when the entire human race perished because they wouldn't listen to Noah, God's preacher of righteousness, one of only eight souls saved. God was love when all the adult population of Israel, having been delivered from Egypt, equivalent to being born again, disbelieved God and perished in the wilderness, except two people who loved God enough to believe His words and entered the Promised Land, the equivalent of a Spirit led life lived in Christ.

Another common "Yes, but" among carnal Christians is the delusion that sin is inevitable and that it is pointless to consider being made free from sin. The cleverness of this deception is that if we only look to our human nature or flesh to overcome sin then sin is inevitable. But this totally ignores what Christ came to do in us— to make us free from sin.

Gal 3:1-3 **O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth...Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh** (can you grow spiritually, can you overcome sin by your human nature?)

John 8:32 (Jesus) **And you shall know the truth, the truth shall make you (sin) free.**
John 17:17 (Jesus to the Father) **...Your word is truth** (God's word in us frees us of sin).

Ps 119:11 **I have hidden your words in my heart so that I will not sin against You.**

2 Cor 3:16 **When one turns to the Lord, the veil (of deceptive flesh) is taken away.**

Rom 6:22 **But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.**

If I'm deceived by sin, like almost everyone is according to the Bible, and I am presented with the truth of God's words, but I choose not to believe them; then I'm not deceived through ignorance but I want to be deceived. How then can I have a love for the truth?

2 Thess 2:10-11 **...Those who are on their way to hell because they have said no to the Truth; they have refused to believe it and love it and let it save them, so God has to give them up to believe deceptions, lies with all their hearts.**

Isa 55:7 **Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon** (how long will you wait - too long?).