

SIN—THE GREAT DECEIVER

The writer of Hebrews warned: “Take heed...lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin” (3:12–13). *Deceit* is the act of giving a false impression, by appearance, direct statement, or influence. John described Satan as “the deceiver of the whole world” (Rev. 12:9). Sin is his principal means of deceiving us and separating us from God.

Sin always hides its true self, pretending to be something it is not. It is the all-time champion hypocrite. Note the ways sin deceives:

- **It pretends to serve us while seeking our mastery.** Those enslaved by alcohol, nicotine, or other drugs all thought these toxic agents would be their servants to bring them pleasure, popularity, or prestige. Likewise, people become involved in pornography, gambling, fornication, lying, shoplifting, fraud, and other sins, only to find to their horror that these have become their cruel taskmasters rather than their pleasure-giving, submissive servants. Paul warned against letting sin “reign” in us (Rom. 6:12), which is what it ever seeks to do—and **will** do if we let it. Whatever sin appears to promise, it will not be our servant if allowed to hang around. It demands mastery of our lives.
- **Sin makes itself attractive and desirable, but behind the mask, it is horribly ugly.** Satan tempts us by making sin desirable. He tempted Eve by promising a great reward; the forbidden fruit then became beautiful to behold. David so desired Bathsheba that he excused the sins of adultery and eventually murder, in order to have her. Satan knows nothing of “truth in advertising.” The liquor industry wants us to associate with it only the “good life” and the “good times.” It is silent about the misery of its mil-

lions of slaves, its victims on our highways, and its part in countless broken homes and lives. Sin deceives by presenting itself as a lovely, desirable maiden, but it turns into a filthy, toothless hag when embraced. Satan cleverly hides sin's awful ugliness and terrible consequences, in both time and eternity.

- **Sin pretends to be right even though it is utterly wrong.** Perhaps Satan's greatest deception is to convince people that there is no such thing as sin. He erases the line between good and evil, right and wrong. He reclassifies sin as mere "illness." He convinces us that any behavior that brings pleasure or happiness is justified. He sings to us, "It can't be wrong when it feels so right." Sin is still sin, however "right" it may feel for the moment. If persisted in, it will pay the wages of eternal spiritual death (Rom. 6:23).

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