

## The Deceitfulness of Sin

by Hendrik Joubert

When you consider some of the victims of deceit and deception, such as the poor senior citizens who are conned out of millions of dollars, do you find yourself being overcome with pity for them and with rage towards those who engage in this type of detestable behavior?

When you listen to the details is it not remarkable how you are able to recognize all the warning signs missed by, not only these victims, but also by others who suffer personal adversity? At times we may find ourselves at a loss trying to explain how someone could be caught when the scam seems so obvious, and how people could make such poor decisions to spiral downward into serious trouble.

Is it not equally remarkable how we will often fail to see these signs when we are personally involved? When we make a mistake, everyone who faced similar circumstances would have succumbed; however when we consider others first we are *surprised* by their ignorance or their apparent foolishness.

Consider the fact that in order for deceivers to be successful they depend on specific qualities in their victims, not all of which are positive: ***Confidence tricks exploit human weaknesses like greed, dishonesty, vanity, but also virtues like honesty, compassion, or a naïve expectation of good faith on the part of the con artist.*** (Wikipedia)

As we realize that people often suffer because of their greed and dishonesty sympathy diminishes. When we discuss the elderly we do not want to seem callous so we will rather have them be vulnerable due to the ***virtues honesty, compassion, or a naïve expectation of good faith on the part of the con artist.*** It is this very attitude which causes us to become vulnerable as *confidence* artists are able to manipulate our emotions.

Now apply these principles to the spiritual realm as we consider our vulnerability to sin. ***Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;<sup>13</sup> but exhort one another daily, while it is called "TODAY," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*** (Hebrews 3:12-13)

Our first inclination is that sin consists of immoral acts only, so let us consider these first. In **Galatians 5:17** we learn of our dual nature: ***For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.*** The pursuit of salvation concerns the exercise of *self-control* as the spiritual side of self conquers the flesh in order to bring ***every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ***, motivated by faith in Him. (**Acts 24:25; Romans 8:6-8; 2Corinthians 10:5; Hebrews 11:6**)

When we find the desires of the flesh too enticing, we alter the doctrine, and do so to *compliment* God; reminiscent of the way con artists patronize their marks. Consider the idea of *salvation by faith alone, without any works*. **James**, and inspired writer, denounces this doctrine in simple terms explaining that our *actions* demonstrate our faith, or the lack thereof, and he does so in language some may consider insulting: ***But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?*** (James 2:20)

He explains how faith in God was the motivating power behind Abraham's willingness to sacrifice the only logical means for God to fulfill His promise of a making him a great nation. Abraham's actions made his faith *perfect*, or complete – his actions demonstrated that he believed God. (**James 2:21-24**) Faith in God is demonstrated by obedience to His simple instructions such as being baptized in order to have your sins forgiven – to be saved. (**Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-4; John 3:3-5; 1Peter 3:21**) As in the case of Naaman the leper (**2Kings 5**) the *healing* power is not in the water as such, but in the obedience which demonstrates faith in God and in His word.

The disobedience resulting from the doctrine of *salvation by faith alone* is *justified* by *complimenting* God – *there is nothing we can do to deserve salvation*, it is solely *by the grace of God*. Neglecting the simple commandments of God becomes a noble compliment to His grace. If the actions are eventually undertaken the purpose and meaning assigned by God is altered. Those who point out the deception of this doctrine which discourages obedience to the graciously simple acts commanded by God so as to demonstrate faith in Him and in His word, now seem to be the villains.

***“But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?” “Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. <sup>22</sup> Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' <sup>23</sup> And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’ (Luke 6:46; Matthew 7:21-23)***

These sobering words coming from the mouth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God should wake us up to realize that accepting Jesus as your personal Savior is demonstrated by doing as He says. We will be judged by the words He personally spoke as well as those delivered through those who recorded it by inspiration. **(John 12:48; John 14:25-26; 16:12-13; Hebrews 2:1-4; 2Timothy 3:16-4:3; 2Peter 3:15-16) Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. (Ephesians 5:17)**