

The Discipleship Project-Summer 2017

Series 3: The Masquerade of Sin

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Series Big Idea: Because Satan masquerades the destructive nature of sin, we must be honest with ourselves about the carnage sin brings.

Lesson 3.1: The Disguise of Sin

Lesson Big Idea: The consequences of sin are usually not seen at the beginning of one's engagement in sinful behavior.

FOUNDATION

Scripture Focus: Genesis 3:1–5 (PPT)

The Daily Record, a Scottish tabloid newspaper, shared the following story of a thief who tried to steal gasoline from a motor home. John, the owner of the motor home, said: “We made sure everything was safe and secure and settled down for the night. The following morning, we were disgusted to find that under the cover of darkness, a thief had attempted to siphon off diesel from the fuel tank.” But the thief made a huge mistake. Instead of attaching the hose to the gas tank, he had mistakenly attached it to the septic tank. A plastic siphon tube, an empty fuel container, and vomit were found next to the camper. John said, “Fortunately for us, he did not get any diesel.” Unfortunately for the would-be-thief he ended up with a very nasty taste in his mouth.

Although this story is funny, sin is no laughing matter. Sin is real. And just because the consequences of sin are not always seen initially, does not mean there are no consequences. Sin costs, and sin's cost is huge.

This was something Adam and Eve soon came to realize—there are consequences to sin even though the consequences may not be readily recognized. In the beginning though, everything was perfect. There was nothing wrong with their marriage. There was nothing wrong with their health. There was nothing wrong with their emotions or mental state. There was nothing wrong, whatsoever, with anything. Adam had the perfect job; there was nothing wrong at work. His boss had given him full reign. He could do anything he wanted, anytime he wanted, and however he wanted. Except for one exception. And there were consequences to this one exception. Howbeit, these consequences were not readily seen or recognized, but this did not make them any less real.

That there were consequences to one's actions was something a different character in our story understood very well. Satan knew. He, himself, had experienced them. However, he omitted that part of his story when he engaged in conversation with this perfect couple who had everything going for them. If he had left them alone, perhaps nothing would have happened. But he talked, and everything he told them was a lie. He deceived them. He suggested what the boss had said wasn't entirely true, that the boss was holding back some things from them because the boss knew if the instructions were violated, the couple would be blessed more than they already were. But that's not what happened. And we know this to be true because we know the rest of the story. The consequences of their actions were devastating, not just for the couple but also for all of humanity.

FRAME

What can we glean from this story? What lessons can we learn concerning the deceptiveness of the serpent, the deceptiveness of sin, and the deceptiveness of self?

Scripture reveals **Lucifer was an archangel who was cast out of Heaven**. At one time he was the covering or guardian angel. According to Ezekiel 28:14, he was created to dwell in the throne room of Heaven in the very presence of God. Adorned with gold and precious stones, Lucifer's beauty and splendor were unrivaled by any of the other angels. But this did not last; rather, his place of prominence came to an end. Why? The answer is simply because there are always consequences to sin, even though they may not be initially seen.

Isaiah reveals the fall of Lucifer from Heaven, which resulted in his status as the creature he is today: "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.' Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit" (Isaiah 14:12–15, NKJV). (PPT)

- **What was Lucifer's great sin and what can we learn from it with regards to our maintaining a proper relationship with God?**

Lucifer had wisdom. He had beauty. He had ability. He was a cut above the others. And, yet, he wanted more. He wanted to be like God, to be worshiped like God, and to function as God. Hence, he sought to exalt himself. But instead of exaltation, he was brought low. He was demoted. He was cast out. **Lucifer fully understood the devastating consequences of sin, but he did not share this insight with Eve.** (PPT) (PDG) Instead, he lied. (See Genesis 3:4–5.) (PPT)

Such is the deceptive nature of Satan, formerly known as Lucifer. His purpose, his intent, his aim, his desire is to thwart the plan of God. He comes only to steal, to kill, and to destroy. In contrast, Jesus said His purpose was that we might have life and have it to the full. (See John 10:10.) But that is not the serpent's purpose. That's not his aim. He

aims to destroy everything good and perfect in our lives. He tells us the consequences of sin are not real and that God does not have our best interest at heart. But he is a liar. He is deceitful. **We would do well to recognize the deceptive nature of Satan. (PPT) (PDG)**

- **In what ways is Satan deceptive?**

According to Romans 5:12, **because Adam and Eve fell, sin entered the world.** Likewise, the consequences of sin were passed on, too. Daily, now, we are confronted with the devastating consequences of sin. We also daily encounter the deceptive nature of the serpent, of sin, and of self. We are told lies every day that the consequences of sin are not real. But they are. Unfortunately, many are unaware of the devil's schemes and unaware of his deceptive nature. And many are unaware of the devastating consequences of sin.

Considering the devastating consequences of sin in the lives of Adam and Eve, everybody should want to avoid sin at all cost. But what are we to avoid, exactly? In other words, what is sin? If we want to refrain from sinning, we might want to consider what sin is.

The Old Testament reveals eight Hebrew words for sin, which have been translated into English as bad, wickedness, guilt, sin, iniquity, err, wander away, and rebel.

These words and their usage in the Old Testament offer some insight into the essence of sin, and from them we learn this simple truth—**sin, at its core, is disobedience to God. (PPT) (PDG)**

- **Why should disobedience to God be taken seriously?**

In the New Testament there are at least twelve English words used to describe sin. These words are translated in English as bad, evil, godless, guilt, sin, unrighteousness, lawlessness, transgression, to be ignorant, to go astray, to fall away, and hypocrite.

The use of these words lets us know that **sin is a failure to live up to God's standards.** Notice, sin is not just disobedience to God; sin is failure to live up to God's standards.

Interestingly, there is one Greek word for sin that is used more than others. This word is *hamartia* (*ham-ar-tee-ah*), which simply means missing the mark. Paul used a version of *hamartia*, *hamartano*, when writing Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Coming short of the glory of God is the same as missing the mark.

- **Why should we be concerned about coming short of the glory of God?**

We all have missed the mark. That is, we all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. We all have failed to live up to God's standards.

There are consequences to missing the mark (*hamartia*—"miss the mark"). When we miss the mark, we experience shame. (PPT) (PDG) Shame is what Adam and Eve experienced, and shame is why they sought to cover themselves. **Missing the mark**

causes us to become fearful. Adam and Eve were filled with fear after missing the mark.

- **What are some fears that a person might have as a result of sin?**

When we miss the mark, we experience loneliness. This, too, is what Adam and Eve endured. Closeness with God was replaced with loneliness when Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden. **Missing the mark fractures our relationships with others. (PPT) (PDG)** It keeps us from growing closer to God, and it also keeps us from growing closer to others. Missing the mark separates, fractures, and breaks apart what is meant to be together.

- **In what ways does sin fracture relationships?**

These are overwhelming consequences of missing the mark. But perhaps even more devastating is that **missing the mark leads to more sin.** Things do not get better; they get worse. The aftermath of Adam and Eve missing the mark bears witness to this. Adam and Eve missing the mark, in time, led to Cain missing the mark and killing his brother Abel.

- **Why does one sin lead to another sin?**

Lastly, **missing the mark ultimately results in eternal death.** (See Romans 6:23.) (PPT) (PDG)

Thus, **we would do well to recognize the deceptive nature of our frailty; we miss the mark.**

Considering the devastating consequences of sin, we must ask, “Why would anyone want to miss the mark?” But perhaps a different question should be asked, because most people do not want to miss the mark. A better question might be, “What causes people to miss the mark?” In searching for the answer to this question, there is a possible answer—people miss the mark when they buy into the lie that the consequences of sin are not real. Hence, **it is imperative for us to recognize the deceptive nature of our own heart.**

- **How might we recognize the deceptive nature of our own heart?**

One would think when considering the devastating results of sin, we would not sin; yet sin abounds. We know sin is costly and that there is a hefty penalty, yet when we succumb to sin, we fail to consider the penalty. Why is this true? It is really quite simple. **The consequences of sin are often hidden, not readily seen or realized. (PPT) (PDG)** And because they are hidden, or not readily seen, we are prone to think they do not exist.

Though the consequences of sin are not readily seen, they are reality. Consider radio waves. They cannot be seen, but we use them every day. Or consider atoms. They are the smallest building block of matter. Everything in the universe, which can be seen, is made of trillions of atoms that cannot be seen. How about matter? Eighty percent of the matter

in the universe is made up of dark matter, which cannot be seen. It is amazing that though we cannot see oxygen, it is essential for keeping us alive. What about gravity? We can measure it. We experience the effects of it. And yet no one has ever seen it. Consider our minds. Scientists know how to observe the brain and its chemical reactions, but we cannot see thoughts. Finally, consider emotions. We can see people's facial expressions, observe body language, and so on, yet emotions are completely intangible.

We think because the consequences of sin are hidden, somehow they are not real. But they are very real. Lucifer, Satan, the devil is a liar and a deceiver. And he wants us to believe the lie that the consequences of sin are not real. But that is not true, and we are deceived when we believe otherwise.

But we have an advantage Adam and Eve did not have. We can see the devastating consequences of their sin. They had no example to consider, but we can learn from their mistake. Perhaps if they had known the struggle of living life outside of the Garden, they would have made a different decision. If they had known the guilt they would experience, and how they would hide from God because of that guilt, they would have made a different decision. If they had known of the pain and heartache they would feel as parents when Cain killed his brother, Abel, they would have never eaten of the fruit.

- **Do you think a better understanding of the consequences of sin is beneficial? If so, why?**

We must not be ignorant of the devil's devices. (PPT) (PDG) (See II Corinthians 2:11.) (PPT) We should never expect him to tell the truth; the truth is not in him. However, we should expect him to masquerade himself as an angel of light. (See II Corinthians 11:14.) (PPT) But he is not an angel of light. He is a fallen angel—a rebellious, evil, cunning, conning, deceiving devil. He is a liar.

FINISH

Nancy Shulins, in the *Journal News*, Nyack, New York, tells the following story of the art of deception and its aftermath.

Bob Harris, weatherman for New York TV station WPIX-TV and the nationally syndicated independent network news, had to weather a public storm of his own making in 1979. Though he had studied math, physics, and geology at three colleges, he left school without a degree but with a strong desire to be a media weatherman. He phoned WCBS-TV, introducing himself as a PhD in geophysics from Columbia University. The phony degree got him in the door. After a two-month tryout, he was hired as an off-camera forecaster for WCBS. For the next decade, his career flourished. He became widely known as “Dr. Bob.” He was also hired by the *New York Times* as a consulting meteorologist. The same year both the Long Island Railroad and then Baseball Commissioner Bowie Kuhn hired him.

Forty years of age and living his childhood dream, he found himself in public

disgrace and national humiliation when an anonymous letter prompted WCBS management to investigate his academic credentials. Both the station and the *New York Times* fired him. His story got attention across the land. He was on the *Today Show*, the *Tomorrow Show*, and in *People Weekly*, among others. He thought he'd lose his home and never work in the media again. Several days later the Long Island Railroad and Bowie Kuhn announced they would not fire him. Then WNEW-TV gave him a job. He admits it was a dreadful mistake on his part and doubtless played a role in his divorce. "I took a shortcut that turned out to be the long way around, and one day the bill came due. I will be sorry as long as I am alive."

The consequences of sin are real. To believe otherwise is to believe a lie. Sadly, this is what Eve believed. She believed she would live forever. But she died. The serpent told her she would obtain great knowledge and would be like God. But, instead, her relationship with God became impaired. She thought she would obtain untold wisdom. But her decision to believe a lie made her a fool.

We can learn from her mistake; we can learn from her example. We should not be ignorant of the devil's devices. Instead, we must be wise. He is a liar and the father of all lies. Don't believe a liar; believe the one who cannot lie.