

Seeing Sin To Be *Sin*

Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.
Romans 7:13

REVIEW

1. **Things can appear different from what they are.** (“But sin, that it might appear sin”)

A. Inanimate things

1. See Jesus' point with bread/stone, fish/serpent, egg/scorpion.
2. Gravy can appear to be pudding. Carved wood, stone, or metal can appear to be gods!

B. Persons

1. Jesus – Who do people say I am? Some said John the Baptist: some, Elijah; others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. When He walked on water the disciples thought He was a ghost. Enemies thought Him to be a blasphemer and a devil. Today: Good man? Role model? Or Christ, Son of the Living God?
2. Devil – can be thought to be an angel of light (II Cor. 11:14).
3. Immoral woman – can be thought the way to happiness but is the way to hell.
4. David convinced people he was mad; disciples were thought to be drunk; Mary was thought immoral; Paul thought Christians to be heretics; the world will think Antichrist to be savior.

C. What the Scriptures Say

1. “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”
(Prov. 16:25)
2. II Cor. 13:5 tells us there are people who think they are in the faith but are reprobates.
3. I Cor. 10:20 tells us that nonchristian sacrifices are offered not to God at all, but to demons!
4. Things are not necessarily as they seem. Strong drink deceives people (Prov. 20:1); Eve was deceived Satan; Galatians were bewitched by Judaizers; the devil shall deceive all nations.
5. Things can appear different from what they are. Here are two verses describing deceptions:
 - a. “There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.” (Prov. 30:12)
 - b. “Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness.” (Prov. 30:20)
 - c. Examples: Living together before marriage, free abortions promised for the poor, base language, virtually unscrutinized pursuit of pleasure,

2. God would have us see things to the utmost extent. (“that sin...might become exceeding sinful.”)

A. In the original language, “exceeding sinful” is a very strong expression.

1. Greek: *kata' huperbolēn'* – in excessive degree; magnified; to the utmost possible extent.
2. English: “hyperbole” – expressing things to an obviously exaggerated degree to make a point.
 - a. Example sayings: “This bag weighs a ton.” “Give 110%.” “I'm so hungry I could eat a horse.” “His stomach's a bottomless pit.” “I have a million things to do.” “He's older than the hills, skinnier than a toothpick, dumber than a rock, slower than a snail, ...”
 - b. Example folklore: the tale of Paul Bunyan says one night was so cold even the snow turned blue, fish swam south, and people's words froze before they could be heard....
 - c. Example poetry: Robert Burns' “A Red, Red Rose”

*As fair art thou, my bonnie lass,
So deep in love am I;
And I will love thee still, my dear,
Till all the seas gone dry.*

*Till all the seas gone dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt with the sun:
O I will love thee still, my dear,
While the sands of life shall run.*

3. Paul's expression literally means “a casting beyond,” so the idea is exceeding greatness. In his zeal, Paul uses the phrase repeatedly:
 - a. “Covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.” (I Cor. 12:31)
 - b. “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” (II Cor. 4:7)
4. So when Paul speaks of believers coming to see sin as “exceeding sinful,” he is speaking of the irreplaceable value of seeing personal sin truly in its utmost possible extent.

B. Coming to full knowledge is not an uncommon theme in Scripture.

1. Paul says now we know in part; one day we shall know even as we are known (I Cor. 13:12).
2. See the progress being made toward finally “getting it” in John 16:28-30.
3. Compare Ps. 60:3 – “Thou hast shewed thy people hard things: thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment.”
4. An illustration: God-seeking Jews at Pentecost: “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37)

C. The point in our text today

1. Not just to say “I have made mistakes,” etc., but “I have deeply, grievously, and repeatedly offended God and man,” “I am the chief of sinners,” “God be merciful to me a sinner!”

3. This enlightenment comes by exposure to the Law. (“that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.”)

A. All light comes from God.

1. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” (James 1:17)
2. “Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” (John 8:12)
3. “[Jesus] was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.” (Matt. 17:2)

B. It can be miraculous light in the physical world.

1. In Creation – “And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.” (Gen. 1:16)
2. In the Exodus – “In the daytime also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire.” (Ps. 78:14)
3. Paul – “And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven.” (Acts 9:3)
4. Peter – “And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands.” (Acts 12:7)

C. It can be miraculous light in the soul.

1. “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.” (Isa. 9:2 & Matt. 4:16)
2. “In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”
(II Cor. 4:4)
3. “But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.” (Eph. 5:13)
4. “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.”
(II Pet. 1:19)
5. “The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.” (Ps. 119:130)

4. This enlightenment must be personal. (“working death in me”)

A. Paul explains the doctrine by giving his personal testimony.

1. Paul gives an idea of what he used to consider for self-appraisal: Phil. 3:4-6.
2. But notice what he learned: Phil. 3:7-8.
3. How did he learn this? Rom. 7:9.

B. We have seen such enlightenment in varying degrees and ways in others.

1. The God-seeking Jews on the Day of Pentecost who were pierced to the heart
2. David, when he said, “Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD.” (II Sam. 12:13)
3. Job, when he saw his presumption: “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” (Job 42:5-6)
4. The publican who, “standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.” (Luke 18:13)

C. Does God see such enlightenment in us?

DISCUSSION

1. The Bible says, “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” (Prov. 16:25) Have you thought certain things to be right and afterward found yourself to be wrong? Explain. Please list and describe Bible examples of this truth.
2. The Bible says, “There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.” (Prov. 30:12) Do you think ours is such a generation? Explain.
3. Please share your testimony of how the Scriptures brought light to the exceeding sinfulness of your sin, if indeed this phenomenon has happened.