

Be Not Deceived

It's easy to overlook those three little words. Yet they appear at the front end of some of the most often-quoted passages. The warning in 1 Cor. 15:33 is not just that "evil companions corrupt good morals," but that there is a possibility of deceiving ourselves into thinking otherwise. Gal. 6:7 asserts the truth that "whatever a man sows, this he will also reap," but only after establishing the fact that most men convince themselves of the opposite. So it is that when Paul reminded the Corinthians about the kinds of sins that exclude men from the kingdom of God, he used that same three word admonition: "be not deceived" (1 Cor. 6:9).

Our society is saturated with sex. Things that used to cause people to blush behind closed doors are now flaunted in the face of God. But just because our world advertises sex as something common or casual does not mean that the Lord sees it the same way. He created these natural desires as pure and holy, to be enjoyed in the boundaries of the marriage relationship. When those barriers are crossed, the result is sin against God who created and sanctified it. Don't let our culture deceive you otherwise.

Through the account of David and Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11, we find the way to avoid self deception with regard to sexual sin.

"That could never happen to me." David was a man after God's own heart. He was hand-picked by the Lord Himself to be the next king of Israel. It was David who defeated the giant. It was David who twice spared the life of Saul, the Lord's anointed. It was David who befriended Jonathan in a most beautiful way. But the story of his life is not just about David and Goliath, or David and Saul, or David and Jonathan. It's also about David and Bathsheba.

Sexual sin does not just happen. It occurs when people, young or old, single or married, are unwise about the choices they make or careless about the situations they place themselves in. Those who thought they could never be seduced or tempted are suddenly making plans when parents are not home, reserving hotel rooms, or carrying out in the body things they first contemplated in the mind. The moment we think we are immune to the devil's devices is just when he has us in his grasp. Be not deceived.

"I can stop this before it goes too far." David had plenty of opportunities to turn back from the affair before it ever got started. "He saw a woman bathing" (11:2). While this was well before the age of remote controls, the king could have quickly changed the channel and looked elsewhere. "The woman was very beautiful in appearance" (11:2). In the Hebrew, that literally reads, "she was of good appearance – exceedingly." David would never have known that had he turned his head immediately. "So David sent and inquired about the woman" (11:3). Finding out she was married, he could have decided to pursue her no further. "And David sent messengers and took her" (11:4). What possible good thing could have come out of this meeting? One bad decision begat another until finally, "he lay with her" (11:4).

In times of temptation, God has promised that there will always be a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13). All too often, we run right past it or look for the exit that's a little further down the road. Fornication occurs when people think they can get a little closer to the fire without getting burned. Adultery happens when people convince themselves that inappropriate behavior is acceptable since they are "just friends." Be not deceived. The best way to stop it is to not even let it get started.

"No one else knows about it." As soon as Bathsheba said, "I am pregnant (11:5), the coverup began. David ultimately had Uriah, listed as one of his mighty men in 2 Samuel 23, killed in battle so that he could take Bathsheba as his wife and somehow legitimize their unborn child. All of this had escaped the eyes of Israel, but not the attention of heaven. "The thing that David had done was evil in the sight of the Lord" (11:27).

There is no such thing as a secret sin hidden from Him with whom we have to do. Even if we have been able to cover our tracks to keep from hurting those who love us the most, we are still accountable to the Creator of the body. The Scripture says, "fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4). Sins carried out in the dark will be brought to light. Be not deceived.

When confronted with his sin, David repented and accepted the consequences for his actions. God forgave him and restored to him the "joy of Thy salvation" (Psa. 51:12). May we likewise see the truth for what it is, and go our way and sin no more.

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