



[Jeremiah 17:9-10](#)

(9) " The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*,
And desperately wicked;
Who can know it?

(10) I, the LORD, search the heart,
I test the mind,
Even to give every man according to his ways,
According to the fruit of his doings.

New King James Version

Clearly, there is something radically wrong with man. The Bible discloses the seat of man's problem as being his heart, his inner being, including his reason. We are full of falsehood, duplicity, and contradiction. We conceal and disguise ourselves from ourselves.

Perhaps it is in this area that the heart performs its most destructive work; it conceals the exceeding sinfulness of [sin](#) and its tragic consequences and seriousness. It deceives us into thinking that it is not so bad or that [God](#) is so [merciful](#) that He will overlook it. Was it this kind of thinking that preceded the sudden deaths of Aaron's sons, Uzza, and Ananias and Sapphira?

Do we suppose He can overlook an attitude that so casually takes for granted sinful acts that caused the horribly painful and ignominious death of One who was truly innocent, His Son? Does He merely ignore an attitude that cares so little for its own life that it deliberately attempts to bring that wonderful gift of life to an end? Does He just avert His eyes when we do

something that forms part of our character that will prevent us from being in His image? Some people seem to think so, but is there innocence in this kind of reasoning?

Our own hearts deceive us into taking sin lightly. But, believe the Bible: God is *not* taking sin lightly because He loves His creation. Sin has caused all the emotional and physical pain and death that mankind has experienced since Adam. Each of us is suffering to some degree from it right at this moment. Does this bring us happiness? Do we love sin so much that we want it to continue? Are we fully aware it may destroy us? Do we want our sinful way of life to end?

There is only one way it will end, and that is to follow Jesus' advice: "Unless you [repent](#) you will all likewise perish" ([Luke 13:3](#)). When we repent and begin controlling ourselves so that we do not sin, it will not stop sin in [the world](#). But unless *we* stop sinning, sin will never be stopped. *Each person* has to come to see that he is personally responsible for stopping sin in his own life. He cannot wait for others to stop before he stops. The government will not do it for him. Nobody but the individual can stop his sinning unless God takes away the person's chance to repent by putting him to death.

We cannot allow ourselves to be deceived into taking this casually as the world does. They say, "Everybody's doing it." Millions cheat on their spouses. Who knows how many have literally "gotten away with murder"? Many cheat the government of their income taxes and never get caught. But we cannot cheat God. How could we escape the gaze of a Being so acutely aware of what is happening that He sees even a sparrow falling? David writes, "Where can I go from Your Spirit?" ([Psalm 139:7](#)). God not only sees the acts but discerns what is "going on" in the heart (verses 1-4, 23-24).

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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