

From time to time I have found myself standing and watching with enjoyment turkey vultures (a.k.a. buzzards) as they fly overhead. It amazes me to observe the way these large birds can glide so long without ever flapping their wings. And their ability to catch a thermal and soar so high that they are almost completely out of sight, again with hardly a flap of their great wings, is fascinating. Indeed, when you observe turkey vultures from a distance they are fun to watch and creatures possessing a certain beauty and attractiveness. However, get them on the ground where you can more closely examine them and you will find that turkey vultures are rather clumsy creatures with featherless heads feeding on decaying, putrid animals. Up close the gracefulness completely disappears and we see birds that are somewhat repulsive.

Isn't sin often the same way? When observed from a distance we may see in sin something quite attractive, but upon further examination its ugliness appears. When we look more closely at the most attractive of sins, we see something capable of separating us from God and leading us to eternal death and destruction (Isa. 59:1, 2; Rom. 6:23; 2 Thes. 1:6-10). These eternal consequences are no joking matter and should never be taken lightly, for "what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (Matthew 16:26). Yes, a look at the eternal consequences should be enough to open our eyes to the ugliness of sin, but even in this life the repulsiveness is often seen if we take the time to look.

Immodest Dress

Certainly the fashionable, stylish clothes are pretty and will win you compliments from many, but if they are not worthy of one professing godliness (1 Tim. 2:9, 10), there is an ugly side to the apparel. Too much of what is stylish today is sensual in its nature and may end up attracting the wrong kind of attention from the wrong people. You may destroy or at least damage your good name if your clothing doesn't match your profession of faith (Prov. 22:1). The sexy styles which look so pretty in the stores have the ability to cause others to sin (Matt. 5:27, 28) and Jesus warns that it would be better to be drowned in the sea than to be the cause of another's stumbling (Matt. 18:5, 6). And these styles which seem to have so much beauty have the ability to not only lead to sins of the mind, but they may light a fire not easily put out, and that leads us to the next point.

Sexual Sin

Despite God's condemnation (Heb. 13:4; 1 Cor. 6:9, 10), few things are portrayed as more appealing than sex outside a lawful marriage. While it is portrayed as beautiful, natural, and expected of any "normal" people who are in love and perfectly acceptable for those simply wanting to enjoy the finer things in life, think of what it is capable of leaving in its wake: shame, embarrassment for both the participants and their parents, pregnancy, disease, emotional baggage to be carried into marriage, etc. Hollywood can make an adulterous affair look so nice, so romantic, so right, but in reality families are often wrecked by this selfish sin. Don't be fooled by the way this sin is portrayed in novels and on the screen.

Alcohol

If you believe the commercials that run during most sporting events, and if you accept the way it is portrayed in most television shows, alcohol is the key to having a good time. “Adult beverages” are shown as key to friendships, holidays, family gatherings, etc. and every celebration of victory. No doubt there is some pleasure to be had in imbibing, but before you are “led astray by it” (Proverbs 20:1), take a closer look at this “turkey vulture.” Read the description of woe, sorrow, and addiction found in Prov. 23:29-35. Take a close look at the vomiting of drunkenness and observe the pounding headache caused by a hangover. See the domestic violence fueled by drinking. Think about the consequences of a DUI and the number of fatal accidents caused by alcohol. Take a moment to picture the child who goes hungry because his father spent his paycheck at the liquor store, or perhaps lost his job because of his drinking. Do you see the vulture feasting on carrion?

Vengeance

While Jesus says, “Turn the other cheek” (Matthew 5:38, 39), and Paul writes, “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves” (Romans 12:19), we are told that vengeance is sweet and so many novels and movies have portrayed it that way. And truthfully, it is usually sweet—for a moment. But we need to look beyond the moment and realize that all too often, the ugly side comes out as our vengeance prompts further retaliation and friendships, even marriages, are irreparably damaged. Rather than being sweet, vengeance is capable of producing some very bitter fruits. Think carefully before you act because the vengeance you expect to be sweet may leave a bitter taste in a lot of mouths.

Conclusion

Don't be fooled by observations made from a distance. The wages of sin is death (Rom. 3:23) and the way of the unfaithful is hard (Prov. 13:15). “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.” 1 Cor. 6:9-10

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