

DISHONESTY

Why do people do “evil things?”

About 20 years ago Charles Colson wrote that “A generation of liberals in academia and government has accepted the view that if only the evils of society – such as poverty, unemployment and racism – were overcome, crime would disappear.”

Former Attorney General Ramsey Clark, for example, expressed this notion when he wrote: “Healthy, rational people will not injure others.” In other words, poverty was the cause of crime.

Eventually someone had to do a study to find out if that was true. Someone finally asked: is it the poor the unemployed/ the down trodden of this world that do evil things. A New York study of the 1977 rioting in New York revealed that:45% of the arrested looters had jobs.

Only 10% were on the welfare rolls.

Furthermore, the study revealed that the looters stole things for which they had no use or need.

So, why did these people steal? Why do people do evil things? Several studies have dealt with this question and many agree with a Professor Thomas Sowell of Stanford University who wrote, “People commit crimes... because they put their own interests or egos above the interests, feelings, or lives of others.”

In other words... people sin because they have made a choice.

In the days of Isaiah... many leading Judeans had made a choice.

The people Isaiah was talking to were not street people. They were not vagrants or unemployed. They were the leaders of government, priests and people of responsibility. And yet, they had made a choice: they had chosen to live evil lives.

Isaiah 59:3-4

“For your hands are stained with blood, your fingers with guilt. Your lips have spoken lies, and your tongue mutters wicked things.”

No one calls for justice; no one pleads his case with integrity. They rely on empty arguments and speak lies; they conceive trouble and give birth to evil.”

As Isaiah 59:7 puts it: “Their feet run to evil, And they make haste to shed innocent blood; Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths.”

These people not only chose evil lifestyles, they ran toward them.

But... why would people choose to live like this?

Why would people choose to live their lives backward?

Did they just get up one morning and say:

“Hey, I think I’m going stain my hands with blood this morning!”

Or “I think I’m just going to just go out and tell lies and speak wicked things today”

I don’t think so!

I think people ended up like this because they’ve made bad choices LONG beforehand.

What kind of bad choices?

Well... the first bad choice people make is “listening to the wrong people”

In Proverbs 1 Solomon tells his son

(Proverbs 1:16) “My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent... do not walk in the way with them, Keep your foot from their path; For their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed blood.”

In other words... Who we spend time with will influence how we think and live.

1 Cor. 15:33 tells us same thing do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."

If I spend time around evil people...

I begin to act like them.

I begin to accept their standards of right and wrong.

Even if – initially - I don't believe what they believe.

Don't be deceived, bad company spoils good morals.

Who you hang out with – will determine how you think and how you live. It will influence the choices you make in your life.

The 2nd bad choice Judah had made was – they'd chosen to spend their lives playing with spiders and snakes.

There was a cute little love song back in the 70's that went like this:

“I don't like spiders and snakes and that ain't what it takes to love me... like a I want to be loved by you.”

Isaiah 59:5 tells us They hatch the eggs of vipers and spin a spider's web. Whoever eats their eggs will die, and when one is broken, an adder is hatched.”

They liked playing with Spiders and Snakes. But God told them “that ain't what it takes to love me, like I want to be loved by you.”

Now, why would anybody want to play with spiders and snakes? Would any of you raise vipers and adders in your home? Of course not. What a silly thought. But God uses this imagery of hatching viper eggs and spinning spider's webs because it is extremely graphic. He wants to make it clear that one of the habits of the Judeans had gotten Him angry... but what sinful practice could God have been comparing to playing with snakes and spiders?

I believe the answer is found in the previous verse Isaiah 59:4 “No one calls for justice; no one pleads his case with integrity. They rely on empty arguments and speak lies; they conceive trouble and give birth to evil.”

How had these people gotten into playing with spiders and snakes???

They had begun to accept dishonesty as normal.

They relied on empty arguments and they spoke lies...

Now that's not as bizarre a concept as you might think...

When he was still a powerful media spokesman, Dan Rather was trying to explain the fact that a politician he liked had been caught in several lies. Commenting on this, Rather said:

"I think you can be an honest person and lie about any number of things."

In other words... he was willing to tolerate dishonesty.

He was willing to accept lying as if it were truth.

Jesus said that when people get to believe that dishonesty is acceptable they have played with biggest snake in the pit.

Jesus told one crowd of people

(John 8:44)

"You belong to your father, THE DEVIL, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

Why do people accept dishonesty?

Why would they embrace falsehood rather than truth???

People lie to protect their interests.

They lie to gain control over the people around them.

They lie to cover their sins.

Sometimes they'll prefer lies to truth because the truth tells them something they don't want to hear.

And, the Bible tells me that even my own heart lies to me sometimes. "The heart is deceitful above all things." (Jeremiah 17:9)

In other words, there are times I'll be deceitful without even realizing it.