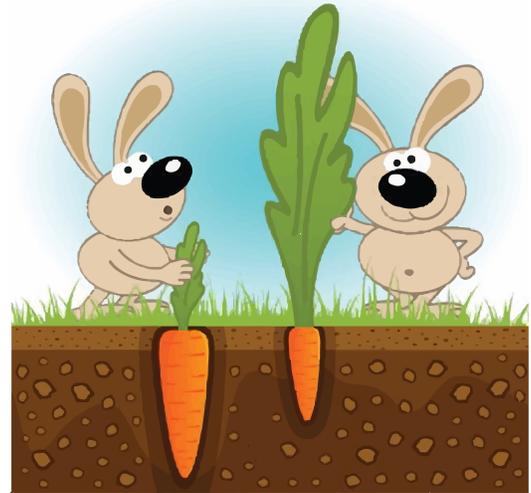


Things Aren't Always as They Seem

You are looking at things as they are outwardly. If anyone is confident in himself that he is Christ's, let him consider this again within himself, that just as he is Christ's, so also are we. (2Corinthians 10:7)



Many times, looks are deceiving. This is especially true if we focus on only what we want to see. Paul, as he wrote to the Christians in Corinth, told them that they were judging things after their outward appearance. They were reaching decisions which were not what they seemed to be. They were glorying in appearance. Paul, in defending his apostleship and service to the Lord, has already warned them of those who judge in this way: “*We are not again commending ourselves to you but are giving you an occasion to be proud of us, so that you will have an answer for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart*” (2Corinthians 5:12). There are many things which are not as they seem which may make us do as the Corinthians did.

Many things are worse than they seem.

There is a way that seems right but is worse than it seems: “*There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death*” (Proverbs 14:12). No matter how it seems, there is a right and straight way of the Lord. “*But Elymas the magician (for so his name is translated) was opposing them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him, and said, ‘You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?’*” (Acts 13:8-10).

Man’s feelings are often worse than they seem, for they seem right. Even a fool seems right to himself: “*The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But a wise man is he who listens to counsel*” (Proverbs 12:15). Paul felt he was right in persecuting Christians (Acts 26:9-10). Man can’t direct his own steps. “*I know, O LORD, that a man’s way is not in himself, Nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps*” (Jeremiah 10:23).

The pleasures, treasures, and honors of the world seem so good but are worse than they seem. “*I said to myself, ‘Come now, I will test you with pleasure. So enjoy yourself.’ And behold, it too was futility ... All that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor and this was my reward for all my labor. Thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold all was vanity and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun*” (Ecclesiastes 2:1-11).

Opportunities are often worse than they seem. “*Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me; if to the left, then I will go to the right; or if to the right, then I will go to the left.’ Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere—this was before*

the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah—like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go to Zoar. So Lot chose for himself all the valley of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed eastward. Thus they separated from each other. Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled in the cities of the valley, and moved his tents as far as Sodom. Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the LORD” (Genesis 13:9-13).

Sin is worse than it seems, for it often seems so good. “*But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called ‘Today,’ so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin” (Hebrews 3:13).*

Man’s religion is worse than it seems, too. “*If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man’s religion is worthless” (James 1:26).* “*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation” (Matthew 23:14).*

One is very unwise to judge things by what they seem, for they are often worse than they seem.

Some things are better than they seem.

Truth is better than it sometimes seems to be to people. Remember what Lot’s sons-in-law thought about the truth (**Genesis 19:14**). Remember what Naaman thought about the truth (**2Kings 5**). Most of what the truth says about the plan of salvation, the church, the life expected of a Christian, and the like, is not counted very highly by so many; but it is better than it seems.

The new covenant is better than it seems to some who want to keep the old, as the new has replaced the old. “*But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises ... When He said, “A new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear” (Hebrews 8:6-13).*

Chastening is better than it seems. “*All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness” (Hebrews 12:11).* This is true in the Lord’s family just as it is in the temporal family.

Little things which seem so unimportant may be much better than they seem. “*... On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it” (1Corinthians 12:15-26).*

Be careful as to how you reach your decisions. Things are not always as they seem.