



July 9, 2021

Masters of Justification

"Where is Abel your brother?" Cain's retort was, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?". - **Genesis 4:9**

You can be sure that when Cain committed the first murder recorded in the Bible, his killing of Abel, he was completely justified in his mind. When God came around afterward and asked, "Where is Abel your brother?" Do you see the avoidance in that answer? The wheels in Cain's head were grinding away, mass-producing excuses and evasions. He had his answers ready. Why did he say he didn't know where Abel was? Surely he was lying right on the ground where he left him. Maybe Cain said to himself, Well, I am not 100 percent certain where he is. After all, the vultures might have devoured him and he could be nowhere to be found. He knew exactly where his brother was, but since he had justified the murder in his mind, he would have said anything to avoid the truth.

We are no different; we, too, are masters of self-justification and deception. The foolishness of it all is obvious if we stop to think about it. But Satan counts on our not stopping to think about it. Satan hooks us by deceiving us and leading us into all these foolish ways of thinking about our desires: to dominate others, to look good, to enjoy what our body cries out for. These become preeminent in our minds, the driving force in our behavior, and the source of so much of the evil in the world.

There is nothing wrong in itself with looking good. Jesus said, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (Matt. 6:28-29). People will labor day and night to have their bodily parts modified, twisted and turned in the right directions—all to try to look good. It's fine to look fine. The questions are: Why do we want to look good? What is our motivation? And what are we willing to do to accomplish it?

Likewise, there is nothing wrong with eating, but if you are living to eat, then your god is your belly. Power is good in the same way. We need to exercise power because we were created to do so. We need to have a responsible effect on the world in which we live. At times we need to guide others, to direct them, or to tell them what to do. We may even need to lean on them a little bit to do something. That's all right if it isn't our egos trying to manipulate them for our own purposes. The whole strategy and system of Satan is at work to get us to do just that, which is why there is so much lying, deceit, manipulation, and domination in our world. And so much fear.

Reflect: *Satan uses not only our desires to deceive us but also our fears. Fear that we will not get what we desire can provide the motivation for actions that cause so many of our problems. When you compare the three main sources of temptation—desires of the flesh, desires of our eyes, and the pride of life—with the things we fear, you will find that nearly all our fears are grounded in our desires.*

Take some time this week, explore the ways your fears might be grounded in these three main sources of temptation. (Q) How does this make you vulnerable to Satan manipulating you, on the basis of these fears, so that you drive towards what you want - no matter what?