

DEVICE 5: Satan causes us to see only God's mercy but hides His judgement from us.

Remedy 1 – When God abandons a person to continue in sin, it's a bad thing. When a person finds the way to Hell is free of obstacles, that means that person has grown so used to the stink of death that it has become undetectable. God abandoned Ephraim to idolatry (¹⁷ Ephraim is joined to idols; leave him alone. **Hosea 4:17 (ESV)**). A person God has abandoned cannot be taught to do right (¹² So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels. **Psalm 81:12 (ESV)**). Such a soul is ripe for Hell.

Remedy 2 – God is both just and merciful. God cast Adam out of Eden [²⁴ He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life. **Genesis 3:24 (ESV)**]. **God drowned all life except what was with Noah in the ark** [¹⁷ The flood continued forty days on the earth. The waters increased and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. ¹⁸ The waters prevailed and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the face of the waters. ¹⁹ And the waters prevailed so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered. ²⁰ The waters prevailed above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits deep. ²¹ And all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, livestock, beasts, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth, and all mankind. ²² Everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died. ²³ He blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens. They were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark. **Genesis 7:17–23 (ESV)**; ⁵ if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; **2 Peter 2:5 (ESV)**].

Remedy 3 – if you commit sin and excuse your action by saying God is merciful, God's judgment will be especially severe. (Think of the parable of the unmerciful servant [²¹ Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" ²² Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times. ²³ Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵ And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. ²⁶ So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' ²⁷ And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.' ²⁹ So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' ³⁰ He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. ³¹ When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. ³² Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³ And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' ³⁴ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. ³⁵ So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart." **Matthew 18:21–35 (ESV)**]).

Remedy 4 – If you don't turn to Christ while on earth it will be too late after you die [¹⁹ "There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. ²⁰ And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, ²¹ who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. ²² The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, ²³ and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. ²⁴ And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.' ²⁵ But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.' ²⁷ And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house—²⁸ for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' ²⁹ But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' ³⁰ And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' ³¹ He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.' " **Luke 16:19–31 (ESV)**].

Remedy 5 – Heroes of the faith depended on God's mercy to avoid sin. They did not use God's mercy as an argument to justify committing sin (³ For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in your faithfulness. ⁴ I do not sit with men of falsehood, nor do I consort with hypocrites. ⁵ I hate the assembly of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked. **Psalm 26:3–5 (ESV)**).

Question

1. *Why is it so terrifying that God may be letting us get away with our sin? (See Remedy 1)*
2. *What does it mean "to sin against mercy?" (see Remedy 3)*
3. *Those who have gone to heaven have found that looking on God's mercy is a powerful argument against committing sin (see Remedy 5). So, how does that work?*