

EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

“...FOR THE EQUIPPING OF THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF SERVICE...” ~ EPHESIANS 4:12



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DON'T BE DECEIVED

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We've all been deceived at one time or another. To deceive is “to make someone believe something that is not true” (Merriam-Webster). Where did deception come from, who is behind it, and how is a Christian to respond?

Deception from the Beginning

A cursory reading of Genesis 1–2 should impress us with the power of God and the glory of His creation. When the creation was complete, **“God saw all that He had made, and behold it was very good”** (Gen 1:31). Chapter two concludes the creation account with the impression that everything is as it should be. The picture is one of peace, contentment, completeness, and truth.

This perfect picture is dramatically altered, however, in chapter three. Satan, as a serpent, appeared to Eve and tempted her with the forbidden fruit. Despite Eve's hesitation, the serpent convinced her, **“You surely will not die!”** (Gen 3:4). As a result of this encounter Eve ate of the fruit, Adam ate of the fruit, and both were removed from God's presence. What happened? Why did the story change so drastically? Paul explains it this way, **“The serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness”** (2 Cor 11:3).

It doesn't take long to find deception in the Bible. It was present in the beginning of time and it has continued

to plague man throughout history. Before they conquered the land of Canaan Israel was warned, **“Beware that your hearts are not deceived, and that you do not turn away and serve other gods and worship them”** (Deut 11:16). Jeremiah offered a similar warning when Israel was on the brink of captivity: **“Do not let your prophets who are in your midst and your diviners deceive you.... For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them”** (Jer 29:8–9). These divine warnings indicate how important it was to avoid deception.

Satan’s Work in Deception

It is no coincidence that Satan is called **“the father of lies”** (John 8:44). In fact, as we’ve already seen, Satan became the first deceiver when he **“deceived Eve”** (2 Cor 11:3). Paul also points out that **“Satan disguises himself as an angel of light”** (2 Cor 11:14). In the book of Revelation we read, **“The great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world”** (Rev 12:9). Notice here that Satan is described as deceiving **“the whole world.”**

Peter described this great deceiver as **“a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour”** (1 Pet 5:8). Is it any wonder then that we are encouraged to **“put on the full armor of God, so that you will be stand firm against the schemes of the devil”** (Eph 6:11)? The Greek word translated “schemes” (*methodeia*) is defined by Thayer’s as, “cunning arts, deceit, craft, trickery” (pg. 395–396). Therefore, Paul is telling us that we need to be able to overcome the deceit or trickery of the devil. Paul wrote another church with these words, **“For indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the**

presence of Christ, so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes” (2 Cor 2:10–11). Satan wants to deceive us into acting contrary to God’s will. We must be aware of the potential danger, and guard against it!

While Satan is the **“father of lies,”** and he does work to deceive us, we must not assume that deception will only come from Satan. Some are **“false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ ... it is no surprise if [Satan’s] servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness”** (2 Cor 11:13–15). All too often the deception of Satan is accomplished through the ideas of men. These men may have proper intentions, but it has been correctly written, **“Evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived”** (2 Tim 3:13).

A Warning to Christians

“Let no one deceive you with empty words” (Eph 5:6). **“See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception”** (Col 2:8). **“Little children, make sure no one deceives you”** (1 John 3:7–8). Why does such a simple statement need to be written so many times? Because there are people in the world who are incredibly persuasive in convincing us of things that are not true. Their message is like those in Isaiah’s day **“who call evil good, and good evil”** (Isa 5:20). These are deceptions; they must be avoided! **“We are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming”** (Eph 4:14).

How do we avoid being deceived? The only way is by thoroughly knowing the truth. God has revealed His will which is “**profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work**” (2 Tim 3:16–17). Anything that does not match the written word of God is false. I have been told before that those who are trained to identify counterfeit money do not study counterfeit money in great detail. Rather, they spend time becoming experts in real money. Because they study real money so much, fake money is immediately evident to them. Are we that way with God’s word? Do we study it so much that we immediately see when someone is trying to deceive us into believing a lie? Knowledge of God’s truth is the only way to avoid Satan’s deception.

NOTES: _____

AM LESSON:
Living Like You Have
A Living Hope

PM LESSON:
“I Do Believe;
Help My Unbelief”

**“GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES...”
(MATTHEW 28:19-20)**