

Do Not Be Deceived

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[Galatians 6: 7-8] Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

1. Who Deceives Us?

The verses in Galatians that we read above tell us that, although most people already know the truth that we reap what we sow, there are elements around us that attempt to deceive us and cause us to make wrong choices. Since the time of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, human beings have been deceived time and again. Even now many people are walking in false religions or living under wicked political regimes. Many have been deceived and are being used by Satan as his followers. And most of us, having deceived by our human nature, the world's allurements, and Satan's wiles, have sinned and faltered many times in our lives and needed to repent of them.

If any of you argue that you have never sinned, you are a highly exceptional person. Who are our deceivers? Here in America, we often receive marketing phone calls that attempt to persuade us to invest in certain falsely attractive ventures or to make payments to avoid certain non-existing legal troubles. Those of us who have been duped once or twice are no longer deceived. More serious deceptions, however, are sweet talks regarding our soul's salvation. Such deceptions often endanger our spiritual well-being and God's true blessings from our lives. The Bible warns us of the following categories of deceivers so that we may learn to avoid them and not fall into their traps.

The most powerful deceiver in the world is Satan. Satan, who is called Lucifer, was created to be an archangel of God. He knows all things about God and His kingdom. But he chose to stand against God to gain supremacy over Him. The prophet Isaiah describes Lucifer's motive and eventual downfall.

[Isaiah 14:12-14] How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!

How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations!

13 For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;

I will also sit on the mount of the congregation, On the farthest sides of the north;

14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'

As a step into winning the humanity into his camp, Lucifer deceived Eve, the mother of all mankind, and caused her to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Adam was not careful and was simply persuaded by Eve to join in her sin of deception [Gen. 3:13]. Because of this sin of falling into Satan's deception, Adam and Eve lost the privilege of living in the Garden of Eden with God and were chased out of it. Furthermore, not only they but all their descendants, including us, are born in sin and are destined to face death, having lost the blessing of eternal life. Satan scored a big one in Eden and has been busy working outside of Eden ever since.

Satan has been deceiving humans and busy sowing distrust, wickedness, violence, sinful pleasure-seeking, wars, conflicts, and discord in the world. The reason that the world has been full of such undesirable elements is that we continue to be deceived by Satan instead of seeking godly wisdom and counsel from God. True Christians should be spiritually awake always and endeavor to keep themselves and their families from falling into the cunning traps that Satan has set in our paths.

[1 Peter 5:8-9] Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

The second category of deceivers consists of unbelieving relatives, friends, friends, colleagues, and business associates. I do not mean all of them are deceivers. I am pointing out the fact that many of them do not have your best interests in mind but sometimes seek to take advantage of you. Jacob was deceived by his uncle Laban in wages [Gen. 31:7]. Laban knew about God but was serving idols. Although he offered his daughters in marriage to Jacob, he had the sinful nature of deceiving his nephew for his interest. Shiba, who was the chief servant of Mephibosheth, the last surviving son of King Saul, deceived his master and King David. Having been served in material kindness during his difficult journey of fleeing from his son Absalom, David was deceived by the cunning scheme of Shiba and ordered Mephibosheth to divide his possessions with Shiba.

Likewise, our employees, servants, and associates can deceive us. However, we as God's children should treat all unbelievers, who even try to take advantage of us, with forgiveness and mercy. Nevertheless, we need to be careful so that their sinful nature does not affect our spiritual well-being or rob us of our peace with God. For this very reason, the apostle Paul advises us to be careful in our association with sinful acquaintances.

[1 Corinthians 15:33-34] Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits." Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.

The third category of deceivers is the sinful nature in us and around us. How does sin deceive us? The apostle Paul explains as follows:

[Romans 7:11] For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.

The meaning of this verse is somewhat complex. What he is saying through this verse is that sin made Paul think of himself as a righteous person before God as he faithfully adhered to the law of Moses when, in fact, he was a spiritually dead person before God, one without the true life in himself. Many people are being deceived in this manner. They think *"I have not committed a serious crime, so I am not a sinner. I attend church services regularly and give collections and tithes. I expect God will accept me into His kingdom when I die."* This wrong attitude is the result of sin's deception, which is a sin before God. And this wrong attitude causes us to be far from the truth of God regardless of our religious shell life. The apostle John explains the truth about such an attitude as follows:

[1 John 1:8-10] If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

During Israel's conquest of Jericho, Achan hid some valuable items found in the conquered city in his tent because he coveted them. This act of covetous deception caused God's anger and resulted in the loss of lives in the Israeli military in the next battle against Ai [Joshua 7]. Similarly, during the early church period, Ananias and Saphira deceived the apostles regarding their material contribution to the church. Their lie was exposed and resulted in their deaths [Acts 5:1-5]. These are examples of how a deception or lie can bring about a loss or damage not only to ourselves but also to the church. Therefore, we all need to be truthful in our service to God.

The fourth category of deceivers is pride, arrogance, hypocrisy, and false doctrine among the Christian community and the church. The people of Israel were delivered from the bondage of slavery in Egypt under Moses' leadership. However, during the 40 years of wilderness sojourn, all died except Joshua and Caleb. They died and their bodies were buried in the wilderness because their goal was not in the Promised Land. They were afraid of the giants in Canaan and did not trust in God's power to help them achieve their goals. This distrust of God became the sin that brought about their downfall. God let them die on the way and did not allow them to enter the Promised Land.

After their settlement in Canaan, the people of Israel failed to show unwavering faith in God, failed to serve Him with true hearts, but rather envied the idol-worship culture of the gentiles in their midst and sought to be assimilated into their culture. This corrupted spirituality in Israel caused their eventual downfall. In the end, God caused Assyria and Babylon to attack and bring down both Israel, then Judah and the great majority of people of Israel and Judah were taken to the conquerors' lands as captives. The temple built by Solomon was destroyed and

plundered in the process. Prophets Obadiah scolded the nations as follows, saying their fear and pride deceived them.

[Ezekiel 16:46-47] Your elder sister is Samaria, who dwells with her daughters to the north of you; and your younger sister, who dwells to the south of you, is Sodom and her daughters. You did not walk in their ways nor act according to their abominations; but, as if that were too little, you became more corrupt than they in all your ways.

They were afraid their comfortable life would be destroyed and were filled with pride in their false belief that, as long as the temple of God was standing in Jerusalem, Judah would escape destruction. This false hope and pride deceived them into denying the reality that surrounded them. It deceived them into believing in their unfounded security. God detested their corrupt religious system, their depraved spirituality, and immoral culture. Thus, God caused foreign armies to attack Samaria, then Judah to lay down severe punishments on His people for their infidelity and corruption. The reality of the Christian church today is in many ways very similar to that of Israel and Judah thousands of years ago. The hypocrisy, sensual and ungodly worship culture, immoral and materialistic church leadership, and more – God hates all these impurities in His church and will lay down His wrath in the Lord's Day.

[1 Corinthians 6: 9-10] Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor [b]homosexuals, nor [c]sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

Fellow Christians! Let us not be deceived. Just because the U.S. Supreme Court allowed same-sex marriages to be legal, God's principles and standards have not changed. They are unchanging in all ages. Why does the church regard idol worship as acceptable, even desirable? The Second Commandment forbids idol worship. If you consider yourself as a child of God and have not forsaken idol worship, have images and paintings of Jesus, Mary, and so-called saints in your house and church, you will have no rewards on Judgment Day though you may be saved. Rather, you will be cast out of the Lord's presence and be weeping in remorse and regret in a far corner of the kingdom. God's people shall remain morally clean and praiseworthy in all respects, standing solid, shining the true light of Christ in this darkening world.

The fifth category of deceivers is false prophets. Lord Jesus warned us when He addressed His disciples as follows:

[Luke 21:8] And He said: "Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time has drawn near.' Therefore do not go after them.

Today the orthodox Jewish sect does not recognize Jesus as their messiah. For this reason, they do not accept the gospel of Jesus Christ. Instead, they oppress and persecute the messianic Jews. They, however, believe the time has come for the messiah to appear. In the past, they have designated certainly respected rabbis as messiahs but nothing significant happened. Now they are considering a different rabbi as the new messiah. Moon Sun-Myong of the unification church deceived many people by claiming he was the new Christ, but he is now dead.

The Islam doctrine recognizes Jesus as a great teacher but not as a messiah. They say Mohammed is the only messiah who received the word directly from God. But, we know the word was with God at the beginning of the world and the word is Jesus Christ. Mohammed married a rich widow and used her wealth to establish a fake religion by modifying the Hebrew and Christian bible into a fake scripture called Quran. His religion has been deceiving hundreds of millions of people all over the world ever since his death. He died just like any other human without resurrection and no gift of the Holy Spirit to his followers. On the other hand, many radical Islamic adherents have given themselves to the Jihad cause believing that they will be rewarded with a multitude of virgins if they die by killing the so-called infidels. Let us not be deceived by this greatest deception in the history of mankind.

2. When Are We Susceptible to Deception?

Too many humans have been deceived by falsehood rather than the truth of God, by Satan's ways and idol worship rather than God's true way, so that numerous false religions, false doctrines, and unjust political systems have enslaved millions of people in bondage of their evil goals and ideologies. Let us now consider the scripture's lessons about the mental and spiritual conditions where we are susceptible to such deceptions.

The first condition of susceptibility is, as it was the case of Eve in the Garden of Eden, the mindset of not fearing the supremacy of God's commandment. Satan knew exactly what was in Eve's heart and thus said words of allaying her concern about the injunction of God by saying, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil [Genesis 3:4-5]." And Satan's tactic was effective in deceiving Eve. Satan tells people that God's words are not necessarily absolute and you can believe in a more desirable future if you accept his rationale and argument instead of the true words of God.

When we doubt the supremacy and inerrancy of God's word, we stand on a dangerous ground where our spiritual building suffers a crack in its foundation. Many so-called theologians and teachers of the Bible today believe that God has changed His principles as times change and His principles and truths promulgated in generations past are not necessarily relevant today. This attitude of deviating from the fundamental belief in the inerrancy and unchangeability of the word of God has caused divisions, confusion, and conflicts in the church.

The second condition that makes us susceptible to Satan's deceptions is when our vision of rewards promised to true Christians is blurred and dim. Do we follow Jesus Christ to receive material and physical blessings here on earth? We say 'No' but certain TV preachers entice the audience to send money to their accounts if they wish to receive material blessings from God. The Book of Revelation warns that the coming Antichrist will deceive people by performing certain awesome miracles.

[Revelation 13:3-4] And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"

Today, god-less wicked people are deceiving people using artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual reality (VR) techniques. The coming antichrist will likely make use of such techniques to deceive peoples of the world into believing that he is the most powerful being and the savior who has returned. We must not be deceived by his cunning deceptions.

3. God's Admonition

God is unchanging and Jesus Christ is the same. His words are always true and God does not change His principles and commandments. They are the same in the OT era, the NT era, and the 21st century.

[Hebrews 13:8] Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

As we aspire to keep our faith pure, we must look up to our eternal God and to Jesus Christ only, who is the unchanging truth. We must continue to have a clear vision toward the eternal rewards promised to those who keep true to our God and our Savior. The values we hold on things that are only temporal need to have their proper limited place for maintaining our livelihood here on earth. They must never be allowed to supplant the place that only Jesus Christ has in our hearts and lives. Let us never forget that we are serving the just God who rewards the faithful and punishes the unbelieving and evil.

God's worst enemy Satan and his hosts have been deceiving humanity during the past 6,000 years and have kept the world in confusion, wars, poverty, and falsehood. God has prepared a lake of fire where they will be thrown into and will suffer for eternity. All God's people in heaven will be able to see their suffering and be glad they have not been deceived by them. On the other hand, Satan and his followers, while suffering in the lake of eternal fire, will see how God's faithful people enjoy the blessings of the kingdom of heaven with God and the Savior Jesus, thus being tormented by undiminishing remorse and pain in their hearts.

[Revelation 20:1-3] Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 3 and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him so that he should

deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things, he must be released for a little while.

[Revelation 20:10] The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

We must be spiritually awake and depart from the conditions of susceptibility so that we keep ourselves from all deceptive tactics and traps. During the wilderness journey of Israel, God's servant Moses warned the people about the deceptions that lie ahead of them as follows. His warning applies to us today.

[Deuteronomy 11:16-20] Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, 17 lest the Lord's anger be aroused against you, and He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which the Lord is giving you. 18 "Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 19 You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. 20 And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, 21 that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth.

Let us not be deceived. As we daily meditate on the scripture, keep God's commandments in our hearts, teach them to our children, and speak about them to our friends and neighbors, declaring plainly that God's principles are the light and guideposts of our life, we will never be deceived during this life. When we come into the Lord's judgment seat, we will receive the glorious rewards promised to His faithful children. Furthermore, we will be blessed with His protection and guidance during this life on earth as well. Amen.