

Don't Be Deceived! (#4)

Joe Slater

Satan specializes in deceit. Weak souls readily buy into his lies, but even spiritually mature Christians can become caught up in his web. For example, Jesus said the way to eternal life is difficult, narrow, and traveled by relatively few (Matthew 7:14). Satan's more broad-minded idea appeals to most people: Just about everybody is headed for heaven; if Hell even exists at all, it's only for the worst of the worst (nobody we know).

Since current American culture rivals that of ancient Corinth, hear Paul's warning to them: "*Do you now know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? **Do not be deceived!** Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God*" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). Paul gave but a representative sampling of the behaviors comprising "unrighteousness." Any or all of them will keep us out of heaven. Some of the Corinthians had previously committed such sins, but had been cleansed by the blood of Christ and set apart to God's service.

Even those forgiven of sins face the temptation to return to it. Again Paul admonished the Corinthians: "***Do not be deceived:** Evil company corrupts good habits*" (1 Corinthians 15:33). I remember feeling resentful when my mother inquired about the reputation of my friends. But she was right! I was deceiving myself thinking I could always resist harmful influences. Of course we must contact worldly people in order to influence them for Christ. But we must remember that while we are "in" the world, we are not "of" the world. A boat serves well in the water until the water gets into the boat. The same goes for a Christian in the world. Do not be deceived!

Be Strong!

Be strong!

We are not here to play, to dream, to drift:

We have hard work to do and loads to lift;

Shun not the struggle; face it! 'Tis God's gift.

Be strong!

Say not the days are evil, who's to blame?

And fold the hands and acquiesce. O shame!

Stand up, speak out, and bravely, in God's Name,

Be strong!

It matters not how deep entrenched the wrong,

How hard the battle goes, the day, how long;

Faint not, fight on! Tomorrow comes the song.

--Maltbie Babcock (via Campellsville, KY)

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Only One Day Left To Live

Sometimes I joke about what I'd do if I had but one day left to live: eat junk, go crazy, etc.

Today it hit me: Jesus knew. And He washed feet.

Steve Bezner (via Facebook)

ABUNDANTLY PARDON

An almost unbelievable thing happened in 1829. George Wilson was tried and convicted in Pennsylvania on charges of mail robbery and murder. He was sentenced to death. President Andrew Jackson granted him a pardon. Ironically, Wilson refused the pardon! The law-making bodies were baffled. Finally, the chief justice of the Supreme Court, John Marshall, ruled: "A pardon is a paper, the value of which depends upon its acceptance by the parties implicated. It is hardly to be supposed that one under the sentence of death would refuse to accept a pardon. But if it is refused, it is no pardon. George Wilson must hang."

A few weeks went by. George Wilson walked up thirteen wooden steps and stopped over a trap door. A rope was placed around his neck and the knot was made tight under his left ear. George Wilson died! Did he have to die? No, he died because he refused a pardon.

Paul wrote, "*For all have sinned*" (Romans 3:23). He also said, "*For the wages of sin is death*" (6:23). Every responsible person is under the sentence of death. We can be completely exonerated, but it must be done on God's terms. Paul wrote that in Christ "*we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins*" (Colossians 1:14). The same apostle said, "*For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*" (Romans 10:10). And Peter exhorted, "*Repent and . . . be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins*" (Acts 2:38).

Our pardon has been granted, but we must accept it! We dare not refuse God's pardon!

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7).

--Cecil Burch (via Old Paths)