

Don't Be Deceived!

Joe Slater

Few things irk me more than someone lying to me. Jesus said the devil is a liar and the father of it (John 8:44). Satan *“deceived Eve by his craftiness”* (2 Corinthians 11:3); he *“deceives the whole world”* (Revelation 12:9). To practice deceit is to imitate the devil!

One particularly dangerous type of deceit is self-deception. Truth can be uncomfortable, and sin can be attractive. We may tell ourselves that sin isn't really that bad and truth isn't necessarily so. Eventually we might convince ourselves that we're right!

How many of us have deceived ourselves into believing that by coming to church and hearing the word of God, we've completed our duty? James, the Lord's brother, wrote: *“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves”* (James 1:22). What would be the point of hearing God's word but then not doing it? Jesus said the wise man who built his house on the rock was the one who heard His word and did it, whereas the foolish man whose house fell heard His word but didn't do it. Be wise!

James gave us another exhortation in 1:26 – *“If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.”* Jesus Himself said our words will either justify us or condemn us (Matthew 12:37). To think we can “shoot from the lip” and still please God is to deceive ourselves! Even if what we say is true, it doesn't always have to be said! Sometimes silence really is golden.

It's bad enough when someone else deceives us; but self-deception often presents an even greater danger!

Who Is Your Enemy?

In a letter to brethren in what is now Turkey, Peter reminds believers of just who their enemy really is. Their enemy is not those Jews who seek to eradicate Christianity, nor is it the powerful Roman Empire. The enemy is not the culture or those around them. The true enemy of all people is the devil, and Peter identifies him in 1 Peter 5:8. The devil deceives the masses as he *“prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”*

But for many, the enemy is everything but the devil. People oppose others for numerous things... skin color, heritage, what they have or may not have, or for simply being from the wrong side of the tracks. Some believe the enemy to be the “elitist, woke, Communist-leaning liberal.” For others, the “right-wing, homophobic, fascist conservative” falls prey within the crosshairs. The world has lost sight of the enemy, and as a result, plays right into his hand.

Friends, the devil does not seek simply to take a bite out of someone. He seeks to swallow people whole, in a single gulp! It is why Peter admonishes believers to be *“alert and sober minded.”* Believers must identify this enemy and not be *“ignorant of his devices”* (2 Cor. 2:11). Christians do this by being aware and staying involved. Whenever a disciple chooses to love and not hate, to forgive and not resent, and to have a compassionate servant heart, the devil is deprived of a meal.

--Kenny Westmoreland (Celina, TN)

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At some point it has to go from being highlighted in your Bible to being written on your heart.

--Lois Stone (Winfield, KS) via Facebook

WORSHIP'S TRUE PURPOSE

The spirits of the righteous have ever been made stronger by means of pure and proper worship. Briefly put, worship is good for the soul.

Yet there is more to worship than what we “get out of it.” The success or failure of worship is measured by a much higher standard than simply how it makes us feel.

True worship benefits us, but it is not inherently *about* us. Worship has, as its central, fundamental purpose, the praise, adoration, and glorification of God. *“God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and is to be held in reverence by all those around Him”* (Psalm 89:7). *“You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created”* (Revelation 4:11).

To be accepted by God, worship must be directed toward Him, not toward ourselves or our personal desires. *“You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve”* (Matthew 4:10). To be pleasing to God, worship must be both heart-felt and truth-based. *“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth”* (John 4:24). Anything less anything else falls short of the worship God expects.

In our desire to be blessed by our worship, may we never forget this all-important fact: at its heart, true worship is directed toward God and designed to please, not us as worshippers, but God as the one being worshiped.

--Dalton Key (Tulsa, OK) via Old Paths

This Is Success

To carry money without spending it

To bear an injustice without retaliating

To stay on the job until it is finished

To do one's duty even when not being watched

To accept criticism without letting it whip you