

Checkin' Out My Walk
#27 - Laodicea - Slippery Slope Of Deception

Gen. 3:1 "Now the serpent was more subtle and crafty than any creature of the field which God had made." (Amplified version)

II Pet. 2:1 But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly (subtlety and stealthily) bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction.
Jude 1:4 "For certain men have crept in stealthily [gaining entrance secretly by a side door]."

How often do we hear: If it looks so "good" ("brings forth such "good fruit"), how can it be deception? Are we expecting deception to be obvious? Why would the Bible describe it as "more subtle and crafty, stealthily" gaining entrance as by a side door?

Barnes Commentary states: "...(false teachers) would not at first make an open avowal of their doctrines, but would, in fact, while their teachings seemed to be in accordance with truth, secretly maintain opinions which would sap the very foundations of religion. The Greek words used in the preceding verses means properly to lead in along with others. Nothing could better express the usual way in which error is introduced. It is by the side, or along with, other doctrines which are true. While the mind is turned mainly to other subjects, and is off its guard, error is gently and silently laying down some principle, which, being admitted, would lead to error. Those who preach error rarely do it openly."

THEREFORE, WE SHOULD EXPECT DECEPTION TO LOOK "GOOD"!

According to the Bible, the easiest method of deception is for error to ride on the back of truth. We hear truth being preached. We assume everything, therefore, being preached is truth, everything being done is Biblical, so we let down our guard...and error and deception can then enter "secretly by the side door."

Do we forget it is a little bit of leaven that leavens the whole loaf?

Carefully examine what the Bible says about things that look "good."

Gen 13:10 - Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it *was* well watered everywhere (before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the LORD, What did God describe as looking "like the Garden of the Lord"?

SODOM > 13:13 But the men of Sodom *were* exceedingly wicked and sinful against the LORD.

Ezek 28:12- Who did God say was "the full measure and pattern of exactness - full of wisdom and PERFECT IN BEAUTY"? SATAN

Matt.7:15 - Who will come "dressed as sheep" on the outside, "but inside are devouring, ravenous wolves"? False prophets > looking "good."

Acts 20:29-30 also speaks of "ferocious, savage wolves" who will not spare the flock. They rise up from the "inside", from those thought to be in the flock of Christ. Their goal is to draw away the disciples after themselves.

Matt.23:27 - Who "looked beautiful on the outside"?

The Pharisees who "inside are full of dead men's bones and everything impure."

II Cor.11:13-15 - For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.¹⁴ And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.¹⁵ Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness... Satan and his servants

Conclusion: Deception looks "good" on the outside, but inside it is deadly.

It requires diligence to discern when Satan comes:

a. as an "angel of light", bringing what looks like the "light" of new revelation on a holy subject:

Belief: Scripture *is* a closed system of truth, complete, sufficient, and not to be added to. It contains all the spiritual truth God intended to reveal.

Rev. 22:18-19 For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book;¹⁹ and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.

b. It requires diligence to discern when Satan comes: not as a devil, but as "another Jesus"

c. not with out-and- out heresy, but with "another Gospel"

d. when he does all this in a religious setting, as "another spirit"

II Cor. 11:4 For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or *if* you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!

Remember: Satan is a "religious" creature! False gospels are true gospels with a few "minor" changes! The Galatians believed the basic truths of Christianity. Yet, Paul said, not once but twice, they were to be "accursed"(Gal. 1:8-9) for receiving a "different gospel," for making a few changes to the true gospel.

Dig A Little Deeper: Look at some passages of Scripture in greater detail to grow in discernment and avoid the deadly dangers of deception.

Genesis 3 contains the foundational truths of discerning deception.

The Garden of Eden was a perfect religious setting.

The relationship between God and the man and woman was so close that He "walked in the garden in the cool of the day" with them. This was spiritual intimacy of the highest order.

Into this perfect religious setting came deception.

Note: Therein was part of Satan's subtle deception > he tempted the woman in the realm of

spiritual intimacy to become closer to God, to be more like Him (v.5- you will be like God).

Remember: Deception came before the Fall, before sin corrupted her mind.

Because of the purity of her being, this deception had to come in a very "good" disguise - so it came disguised in a holy desire for her to be closer to the God she loved. In order for the holy desire to be fulfilled she had to disobey His one "small" warning: just take one little bite of what looked "good" to her.

Here was the first appearance of the "angel of light", bringing new "light" in a "holy" way. She did eat...and Adam did likewise. They lost everything.

It looked "good"; it sounded "holy"; and it would allow them to grow "wise" - how could this be bad when it looked so good?

Had God given them ALL they needed? They did not need more than all the trees and fruits He provided for them. When we are born again, He gives us eternal life and the baptism and sealing of the Holy Spirit - there is no "more" described in the Bible.

Then why the cry for "more, Lord, more"? Biblically, what "more" is there?

Matt. 13:24-30 Parable of the wheat and the tares: Unger's Bible Dictionary defines tares: a poisonous grass almost indistinguishable from wheat while the two are growing into blade, at the beginning. At the beginning all the crop "looks good", according to what the eye can see. As time goes on the tares become visible. When they come into ear, they can be separated without difficulty. The wheat is sown first by the Lord. Then the enemy sows his tares as men sleep. The true gospel may be preached, but "alongside" of it, tares are sown. II Pet. 2 tells us of destructive doctrines, the doom, depravity and deceptions of false teachers.

Interesting Sidenote: Tares are light and lack substance. There are tiny black seeds inside the tares which can cause dizziness and nausea if eaten. Wheat is heavy and bears fruit (grain). Tares stand straight up and proud while the wheat bows from the weight of the fruit in humility. This is a perfect physical and spiritual contrast between the wheat and the tare. One gives life, the other kills. Those in Christ have life, and the other death.

The Matthew Henry Commentary states:

When reason and conscience sleep, and people are off their guard, then the enemy comes in.

Note: When Satan is doing the greatest mischief, he studies most to conceal himself; for his design is in danger of being spoiled if he is seen in it. Therefore when he comes to sow tares, he transforms himself into an angel of light (II Cor. 11:13-14)

The first sign Christ gave of the coming apostasy and religious deception has been largely overlooked and His solemn (stated 3x) warning neglected:

Matt. 24:4-5, 11, 24 "Take heed (beware) that no one deceives you. ⁵ For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show

great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Its nature is specified: false Christs, false prophets, and false signs and wonders. His repetition 4 times of the word "many" indicates a worldwide deception of multitudes.

Paul issued a similar warning: II Thess. 2:3 "Let no man deceive you by any means for that day [of the Lord] shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin [Antichrist] be revealed, the son of perdition."

The spiritual deception to which Christ referred will infect the professing church. That is evident from his words "falling away," or apostasy. They are warning of a turning from the truth. Paul warns us not to be deceived into thinking the apostasy won't come. It must. This warning suggests in the last days many will reject the Biblical teaching: apostasy is inevitable. The false prophets will use their signs and wonders to support their false teaching that revival, not apostasy, is underway.

All revivals may look good: great enthusiasm and devotion may be displayed. But, religious enthusiasm in itself is not evidence of the truth. The Pharisees had great religious enthusiasm, so do Catholic mystics and Mormon missionaries.

False signs and wonders will be an integral part of the apostasy. The departure from the truth will be spearheaded by apparent miracle workers, and the delusion will be made possible by a prevailing emphasis upon experience over doctrine:

II Thess. 2:9 The coming [of the lawless one, the antichrist] is through the activity *and* working of Satan and will be attended by great power and with all sorts of [pretended] miracles and signs *and* delusive marvels—[all of them] lying wonders—

II Tim. 4:3"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.."

Remember Matt. 7: 21-23: Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father Who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in YOUR NAME, and cast out demons in Your Name, and done many wonders in YOUR NAME?

And then I will declare to them, Depart from Me, I never knew you.

Who were in danger: just a few? No, many.

Were evil acts being performed? No, they were doing miracles, great signs and wonders, prophesying.

Were they done in a demon's name? No, in JESUS' NAME! In His Holy Name.

Yet, He said - depart from Me.

How "good" it all looks and sounds - in our eyes. Not in His.

Consider: These are high-profile Christian leaders apparently performing signs and wonders in the name of Christ. Tragically, they seem to think their ability to prophesy and to perform wonders proves they belong to Him. The signs and wonders are so impressive that doctrine no

longer matters -exactly what we see today! Obviously, something more than mere trickery is involved. These miracle workers are backed by the power of Satan, whom they unwittingly serve in the name of the Lord.

Clearly, the Bible predicts a last-days signs and wonders movement-but it will be of Satan, thus a delusion that will deceive many. We must not forget how prone we always are to "signs-and-wonders" deceptions. After Paul's solemn warning in II Tim. 3:1-7: But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ² For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³ unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴ traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! ⁶ For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, ⁷ always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. He makes this remarkable statement:

II Tim. 3:8 Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; ⁹ but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.

Jannes and Jambres, magicians in Pharaoh's court who, through the power of Satan, duplicated (up to a point) the miracles God did through Moses and Aaron. Paul thus declares the last days opposition to the truth will not come so much from outside the church but from those within who are reprobate concerning the faith, depraved men who corrupt the truth. They deceive and lead many astray by performing apparent miracles in Christ's name but which (when more than mere trickery) are actually of Satan.

They lead others into false doctrine and thus a false hope within the church.

Verse 9 promises these counterfeits will eventually be exposed.

Mark 13:22-23 For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²³ But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand.

Note: When signs and wonders are mentioned in the Bible in relation to the end times, they are called LYING signs and wonders!

Jesus warns strongly against signs and wonders in Matt. 12:39 and 16:4 >

"An evil and adulterous generation seeks a sign; but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah."

Then why are so many today being applauded for the "signs and wonders" in their midst? About 100 years ago, the church experienced a renewed interest in spiritual gifts which it had wrongly despised spiritual gifts for centuries. Spiritual gifts were given by God to the saints for the mutual edification of the body of Christ.

Have you heard someone ask, "Have you received the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues?" This began with the rise of the Pentecostal Movement and the emergence of Charismatic churches which led to a resurgence of belief in spiritual gifts. Consequently, the role of the Holy Spirit gained a new ascendancy. An observer of some of the "experiences" taking place in some churches discerned an imbalance existed in parts of the charismatic movement.

"The temptation seems to be toward empty manifestations. This does not require any particular cross, or death to the self-life. Hence it is always popular... Any mission that exalts even the Holy Spirit above the Lord Jesus Christ is bound for the rocks of error and fanaticism."

People began to measure their spirituality, their standing and approval before God, by the spiritual gifts they possessed. Speaking in tongues; prophesying; healing the sick; these things became badges of honor worn proudly by leaders and believers. If you manifested these gifts you were considered to be spiritual, and highly favored of God. Spiritual manifestations became the yardstick by which Christians measured one another.

II Cor. 10:12 For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

Note: Religious men demonstrating pride about their actions is nothing new. Jesus rebuked the Jewish religious leaders of His day for their spiritual pride.

Matthew 23:5-7 But all their works (deeds) they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. ⁶ They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, ⁷ greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.'

Truth: It is ERROR to believe spirituality is measured by gifts instead of by character and fruit of the spirit.

Consider: The Word being preached may be holy. The burden for the lost and the heart's desire for the flock may be real. Individuals' lives may have changed for the better.

BUT are the "impartations", the physical manifestations and emotional excesses truly of God? Could they be error that has come alongside truth?

Are those "little bits of leaven" in terrible danger of leavening the whole loaf?

Videos of the services show people crawling on the floor, howling like wolves, barking like dogs, roaring like lions, unable to speak or even remember their names when they try to give a testimony. Such manifestations were also found in past "revivals" among the Shakers, the Mormons and many other cults. That such things could now be accepted widely as evidence of the Holy Spirit can only testify to the depths of the delusion!

Jude 1:3 Jude exhorts us to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints". Contend against whom? Surely not primarily against godless enemies outside the church. The warning concerns for those within:

Jude 1:4 "For there are certain men crept in (inside) unnoticed" ...ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul confirms Jude in addressing the Ephesian elders: Acts 20:29-30 "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them." The spiritual deception of which Christ warned would be rampant within the church.

Deut. 13 is a warning about deception. Most alarming verses are 1-3:

If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or wonder and the sign or wonder he foretells to you COMES TO PASS, and if he says, Let us go after other gods, which you have not known, and let us serve them. You shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Note: The man called himself a prophet of God. He came from among them, like the tares are among the wheat, like error comes alongside truth. Incredibly, what he said CAME TO PASS! IT LOOKED GOOD!! Yet, God says not to listen to him.

On the contrary, v.8 says: That prophet is to be put to death for talking rebellion.

God says this deception is sent as a test to know whether we love Him totally.

Interestingly, the remedy for deception is for us to do our own "testing."

I Thess. 5: 21 we are commanded by God: But test *and* prove all things [until you can recognize] what is good; [to that] hold fast.

The word prove in Scripture is a metallurgist's term. It is referred to in:

Jer. 6:27 I have set you *as* an assayer *and* a fortress among My people,

That you may know and test their way.

An assayer or prover is to test ore closely because fool's gold looks so much like real gold (it "looks good.") Once the assayer tests the ore and discovers it is gold, he then tests it further to see how pure that gold is - 10k, 12k, 24k.

Interesting isn't it: God tests us to see if we are gold and how pure gold we are.

We are to test all things to see if they are gold and how pure they are.

Counterfeits, in the real world, are only successful in so far as they, as closely as possible, imitate the real. Only very close scrutiny will show that that \$100 bill is not legal tender.

In the real world, if a warning went forth that there were counterfeiters at large, wouldn't we scrutinize our money with great diligence? Yet, there are "spiritual counterfeits" at large and so many are gullibly accepting what they teach at face value.

There is so much more at stake - our spiritual lives hang in the balance.

Acts 17: 11 the Bereans were commended as being "more noble" because they took the Scriptures so seriously they even tested the teachings of Paul.

Note: They did not use the fluctuating criteria of emotions or experiences in their testing. They used the only one reliable, trustworthy, infallible standard - the Word of God.

Isa. 8:20 commands "Direct people to the teaching and the testimony; if their teachings are not in accord with this word, it is because there is no light in them.

Scriptural warnings foretell the delusion we find in our day:

- 1) A false signs and wonders movement led by many false prophets, teachers and "Christ's"
- 2) Many being deceived through these seeming miracles.
- 3) The rejection of the Biblical teaching concerning apostasy -> end times sign

Questions: Does the Holy Spirit indwell the born again? Is He in our midst when we meet? Are we to be filled with the Holy Spirit at all times? Is the Word of God sufficient? Why, then, run after signs and wonders as though unusual manifestations prove that God is at work, while neglecting what God has already given us?

There has been a shift away from a focus on Christ coming to set men free from sin, to an emphasis on spiritual gifts. Rather than emphasizing the growth of spiritual character in the disciple's life, the focus has shifted to one of empty spiritual experiences.

A young rising star in this movement shows on his website: He speaks of oil supernaturally dripping from his hands and fingers, gold dust appearing, and diamonds miraculously materializing. This is vanity of vanities. None of these things has any power to transform a self-centered, fleshly man or woman into the image of Christ.

Consider: The disciple's cross has been replaced with the mystic's mantle. Self-denial is eschewed in favor of self-fulfillment. Mortifying the deeds of the flesh has fallen out of vogue. The theme of these new movements is prosperity, ease, pleasure, and the titillation of mystical experiences.

It is gross delusion to believe that God's favor rests upon covetous and immoral men and women. It does not matter how charismatic the personality, or how spiritually gifted the individual appears. A person is NOT spiritual if their behavior is carnal.

John 17:17 Jesus said: "Sanctify them by the Truth. THY WORD is truth."

Not our emotions, our experiences, or how "good" it looks or sounds or feels...by THY WORD.

Col. 2:8-10 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. ⁹ For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; ¹⁰ and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.