

Contending For The Faith
January 22, 2020 Lesson #3 *Deception: A Slippery Slope*

God did not call you to a playground. God called you to The Battlefield!

When the enemy is in the field, the watchmen dare not go to sleep.

II Tim. 3:1-8 A day is coming and already is, when men shall deny The Faith > the Revelation Of God.

II Tim. 4:3-4 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

⁴ And they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables.

Luke 18:8 when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith in the earth? Will anybody believe?

Deception Is The Focus

Jude 1:4a For there are certain men crept in unawares, ...

II Pet. 2:1a But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies,

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

Counterfeits are nothing new. Satan is "the great imitator." [II Cor. 11:13-15]

- Satan has been hard at work since he deceived Eve in the garden. [Gen. 3:1-7]
- Satan has false Christians. [Matt. 13:38; John 8:44]
- Satan has a false gospel. [Gal. 1:6-9]
- Satan has a false righteousness. [Rom. 9:30-10:4]
- Satan will one day present a false Christ to the world. [II Thess. 2]

False teachers and their teachings have always posed a danger to those in the household of faith. After Israel's exodus from Egypt, God warned that FALSE PROPHETS would arise.

Deut. 13:1-5 If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, ² And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them;

³ Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth [testing] you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

⁴ Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.

⁵ And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee.

Israel was constantly being led astray by false prophets. The Jewish false prophets did the most damage because **THEY CLAIMED TO SPEAK FOR JEHOVAH GOD**.

- Jeremiah and Ezekiel exposed this counterfeit ministry, the people followed the false prophets just the same. Why?
- The religion of the false prophets was easy, comfortable and popular.
- The fact the false prophets preached a false peace did not worry the people. [Jer. 6:14]
- That is the message they wanted to hear!

Vance Havner: "Satan is not fighting churches. He is joining them. He does more harm by sowing tares than by pulling up wheat. He accomplishes more by imitation than by direct opposition."

Peter: Look for false teachers to arise as they have done in the past.

II Pet. 2:1a But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who will secretly (subtlety and stealthily) bring in destructive heresies,

- A. Peter strongly infers that we should regard anyone who claims to be a PROPHET as a FALSE PROPHET.

Is there a difference between a prophet and the spiritual gift of prophecy?

- The spiritual gift of prophecy is listed among the gifts of the Spirit in I Cor. 12:10 and Romans 12:6.
- The Greek word translated "prophesying" or "prophecy" in both passages properly means to "speak forth" or declare the divine will, to interpret the purposes of God, or to make known in any way the truth of God which is designed to influence people.
- Many people misunderstand the gift of prophecy to be the ability to predict the future. It was primarily a gift of proclamation ("forth-telling"), not prediction ("fore-telling").
- A pastor/preacher who declares the Bible can be considered a "prophesier" in that he is speaking forth the counsel of God.
- With the completion of the New Testament canon, prophesying changed from declaring new revelation to declaring the completed revelation God has already given.
- Jude 1:3 speaks of "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." In other words, the faith to which we hold has been settled forever. It does not need the addition or refinement that comes from extra-biblical revelations.

The modern gift of prophecy is really more akin to teaching and it still declares the truth of God. What has changed is that the truth of God today has already been fully revealed in His Word, while, in the early church, it had not yet been fully revealed.

No utterance of man should be considered equal to or above the written Word. We must hold to the Word that God has already given and commit ourselves to sola scriptura—Scripture alone.

Note: False prophets arose in earlier days. We should expect false teachers to arise in our day. Why the switch? Look at chapter 1 for the context.

1. The apostles were raised up as God's instruments to record God's full and final revelation in Christ. They saw the power and glory of the resurrected Lord. Their writings were superintended by the Holy Spirit who caused them to remember all the Lord had taught them while He was with them.

God Himself outlines the criteria to be an apostle. All 3 conditions must be met. You must be...

- A physical eyewitness of the resurrected Christ Acts 1:22; I Cor. 9:1; 15:7-8
- Personally appointed by the Lord Mark 3:14, Luke 6:13; Acts 1:2, 10:41; Gal. 1:1
- Able to authenticate your apostleship with miraculous signs
Matt. 10:1; Acts 2:43; Acts 5:12; II Cor. 12:12; Hebrews 2:3-4

2. Their prophecies, like those of the OT prophets, are thus a "more sure word of prophecy" which provides sufficient light for us until the coming of our Lord. [II Pet. 1:19]

Eph. 2:19-20 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; ²⁰ And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

3. Since these original apostles have accomplished their appointed task, no further prophets are required.

❖ For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard

Heb. 2:1-4 Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip [drift away]. ² For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; ³ How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; ⁴ God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

Expect False Teachers to Arise

Although the need for prophets has ceased, the need for teachers of the Scriptures continues. Some who hold a Bible in their hands will be false teachers.

II Pet. 1:20-21 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. ²¹ For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Truth: The truth of God's Word and the false doctrines of the apostates or heretics cannot coexist.

Jude and Peter teach us to identify the enemy. > false teachers with destructive doctrines
EXPECT THEM! They are already here!

A. Deception - the theme and focus of II Peter 2 and Jude 1

1. Their Methods Were False

II Pet. 2:1 Who privily shall bring in

Jude 1:4a For there are certain men crept in unawares

- Crept = pareisdyo = slip in stealthily; hard to detect; slip in sideways; steal in undercover
- Crept is only found 1x in the NT - here in Jude
- ❖ Indicative mood = the invasion is real and not just a future possibility
- ❖ Cunning craftiness of a lawyer, who through clever argumentation, infiltrated the minds of courtroom officials and corrupted their thinking.

Important Point: The key thing needed to detect such infiltration is the one thing many believers lack = DISCERNMENT

This attack is not from outside the church. They are not pagans; profess to be believers! Sometimes, Satan's undercover agents are "brought in secretly" by those already on the inside. Gal. 2:4 And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:

Remember: An apostate is NOT a true believer who has abandoned his faith.

- An apostate is a person who has professed to accept the truth and trust the Savior and then turns from "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

Question: How could false teachers get into true assemblies of the saints? The soldiers had gone to sleep at the post! They became careless and complacent. Jude had to "blow the trumpet" to wake them up.

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 mean 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 13:10-12 - Lot lifted his eyes and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt...Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east...

Abraham dwelled in the land of Canaan. The land God promised him.

Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent toward Sodom.

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. like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.

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 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. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. 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:

1. 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. God's Warning:

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.

It requires diligence to discern when Satan comes:

2. not as a devil, but as "another Jesus"
3. not with out-and- out heresy, but with "another Gospel"
4. 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.

II Pet. 1:3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

Jesus is ALL I need! Then why the cry for "more, Lord, more"?

Biblically, what "more" is there?

The church's greatest threat has never been from the outside, but rather, from deception within. The Bible is clear. Satan, his false prophets, teachers, apostles are disguised in light; seeming to be workers of righteousness [II Corinthians 11:13-15].

Our adversary's deceptive strategy is to infiltrate our ranks. Like a Trojan horse entering through the city gates, darkness often hides in plain sight.

During the 1930's and 40's, millions of Jews were murdered as a result of the Holocaust.

Museums like the Yad Vashem in Jerusalem have preserved the horrific evidence of how deception played a crucial role in the Nazi plans. The Germans used propaganda to appear as though they were caring for Jews, but millions were being brutally slaughtered. Nazi soldiers were trained to deceive Jews until their death. In one of the most inhumane acts in world history, countless Jews were told that the concentration camps they were being taken to were communities of safety and rest. Some were shown pictures of a beautiful paradise only to arrive at the sterile barracks confused. At the camp named *Auschwitz*, Jews worked to unknowingly lay the foundation for the very buildings that would be their own "death factories."

Like the ruthless deception and false propaganda used by the Nazi's to execute their evil plan, false teachers and the kingdom of darkness use lies to attempt to bring down the church and destroy the kingdom of God. Discernment is crucial to preventing spiritual casualties.

5 ways to define deception:

1. The Gospel is Mishandled

- If God is *always* in a good mood, sin is "too intense" for the pulpit, and the cross is a just revelation of our value, things are heading in the wrong direction.
- If sermons are preached so broadly that people aren't told Jesus is the only way to be saved [John 14:6], there is a problem. The Gospel is not inconvenient, it's essential.
- A church (and its pastor) must be willing to offend people if it means pleasing God. Yes, there is the Good News! But, it's only Good News because there was some bad news.
- The Gospel is mishandled when certain people dogmatically assert that without "signs and wonders" the Gospel has no power. This faulty view is common in Word of Faith theology and flies in the face of Romans 1:16 where Paul declares, "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes..."
- The Gospel is not powerful because it accompanies signs and wonders. The Gospel is powerful because God authored the transformation of dead sinners into living saints.

2. My Experience Informs My Truth

- There is a massive wave of experience-driven theology sweeping over the church.
- If you find that your church or your favorite ministry uses "expert eye-witnesses" claims in order to propagate things that are contradictory to the Bible, the writing could be on the wall.
- As Christians, it's great to have moments of awe in light of what God is doing in the church. But if those moments are built on the mystical experiences of someone like Jesus Culture's Kim Walker-Smith claiming that Jesus appeared in a vision and behaved like "Stretch Armstrong," or Bethel Church's Seth Dahl (Redding, CA) explaining how Jesus appeared to him in a vision to ask *him* (yes, Seth) for forgiveness, things have stretched into dangerous territory.

Currently, our culture is waging war on absolute truth by using subjective experience. People can identify as whatever gender they "feel like" they are, women can kill babies because they "feel like" it's ok, and gay-marriage is ok in more churches than ever because pastors "feel like" we should just love people and not "judge." If our church or our pastor is building on the foundation of experience to define the truth, is that much different than the world?

True Christians must be committed to trusting the Word of God as the authoritative and sufficient filter through which every experiences must pass through.

3. You and I are the Same as Jesus

- Analyze what they do with the doctrine of Christ.
- When pastors with a global platform like Bill Johnson claim that Jesus did His miracles as just a man in right relationship to God and not as God, that's heresy. This is a historical heresy with a modern face.
- It is the springboard for today's mystical-miracle movement which claims that if Jesus was just a man anointed by God when He was on earth, you can be just like Him too!
- If a teaching diminishes Christ in order to elevate man - that's the mark of deception. Satan has always been a master of twisting Scripture to undermine God and shipwreck people's faith.

4. Your Best Life Is Now

- A church is off course if John 10:10 means that the "abundant life" of heaven guarantees health, wealth and happiness on earth. The idea that you *should* be experiencing job promotions, perfect medical reports, and an overflow of financial provision throws out James 1:2, 2 Timothy 3:12, and Luke 18:29 (at the very least).
- If your pastor gears his messages towards "hope" that is realized through material possessions and perfect relationships on earth - he's not a pastor; he's an imposter.
- An over-realized atonement that guarantees riches and health on earth has missed the entire point of trials, suffering, sovereignty and sanctification.

5. Faith Is a Force You Can Unleash

Billionaire prosperity preacher Kenneth Copeland has built an empire on the false teaching that "faith is a force." You can make things happen if you believe.

- If your pastor twists passages about confession of faith in Christ (Romans 10:9) to mean that confession is also the way to land a Bentley on your driveway - run to the nearest Biblical church. When a church has a culture of "making it happen with your mouth," it is time to move on.

This theology defines deception by teaching that God is like a magic genie - you get what you want by rubbing Him right. Positive confessions are repeated in cult-like unison as crowds say, "I am promoted!", "I am healed!"

- They believe that faith does not lead one to merely confess their sin and turn to Christ in repentance, but that faith is a force you can use to control all outcomes.

Deception is a War on Truth

- We've been forewarned that false teachers would "secretly introduce" destructive heresies, and exploit people in their greed [II Peter 2:1-3]. We need not be surprised.
- We know that even in the midst of spiritual warfare, victory has been won by Jesus Christ! Discerning Christians have no need to cower in fear if they are clad in the armor of God [Ephesians 6:11-18]. The believer equipped with the Word of God has everything needed to stand firm against enemy tactics.
- Take courage! Christ promised to build His church [Matthew 16:18].
- Make sure you are part of a local body where He is actually building.