**“Be Not Deceived”**

There are a number of inspired passages of Scripture that warn us about being deceived. Jesus warned His disciples not to be misled by men who would come claiming to be the Christ (Luke 21:8). Webster says to deceive is to cause someone to accept as true what is actually false.

To be deceived with spiritual falsehood is particularly destructive. If someone selling a car conceals serious flaws, they can fool a buyer into paying too much. But if a teacher touts false doctrine, they may contribute to the condemnation of the souls of others. It is critical that we heed the warnings of Scripture about deception.

**There are deceivers out there.** It is sad to think there are folks who will lie about spiritual matters for personal gain, but they have always been around. Paul said some teachers who are deprived of the truth “suppose that godliness is a means of gain” (1 Timothy 6:5). The airwaves are filled with men preaching a gospel of health and wealth to convince hard-working folks to send them money. “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

**Sin, by it’s very nature, is deceitful.** I have always heard that sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay. If we truly understood the consequences of sin, we would be more diligent to avoid it. Sin drives a wedge between us and the God who created us and loves us. Jesus made it clear that exchanging one’s soul even for the whole world would be a bad trade, and we often sell out for so much less.

**We can even deceive ourselves.** Paul wrote, “Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise” (1 Corinthians 3:18). Some believe they are perfectly capable of determining for themselves the meaning of life and their own code of ethics. Jeremiah made it clear these folks are deceiving themselves. “I know, O LORD, that a man’s way is not in himself, nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps” (Jeremiah 10:23).

There is only one way to protect ourselves from spiritual deception. We must appeal to the inspired Scriptures as the basis for every belief. This means becoming a dedicated Bible student. It means demanding that every doctrine prove to be consistent with Scripture before we accept it. Jesus said the truth will make us free (John 8:32) and that the truth is found only in God’s word (John 17:17).

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