

Be Not Deceived

Deception is one of the most common things we see in human interactions. From personal interaction to national discourse to international intrigue, deception is almost the norm! Deception is rampant for many reasons, including the pursuit of power, money, control, domination, and the fact that it often works! If deception seldom worked, only the naive would attempt it.

But deception is, indeed, often successful for the simple reason that deception, by its very nature, seeks to hide the real agenda behind the attempt. To state the obvious, *deception deceives*. Some attempts are more effective than others but being deceived by every whim of others is *not* inevitable. God has a lot to say about deception, in both event and warning. God tells us through Paul's pen, "Do not be deceived..." in several passages. The entire Bible has nearly 100 passages about deception (depending on which English translation is being used).

"Be not deceived" is actually in the imperative mood, meaning it is a command. Knowing that God never commands what we cannot achieve, we should know deeply in our hearts that we can live a godly life that, more often than not, we *can* avoid being deceived.

From the beginning of time, God's people have had to deal with deception. Eve was deceived by Satan, 1 Timothy 2:14. Laban deceived Jacob, Genesis 31. Wine and strong drink are deceivers, Proverbs 20:1, and on and on. And we must remember the ever-present deception that is common in our culture – simply being with those of bad morals, "Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals," 1 Corinthians 15:33. King Saul was corrupted when he listened to the people and feared their voice, "*I have sinned, for I have violated the command of the Lord and your words, because I feared the people and listened to their voice,*" 1 Samuel 15:24.

In today's world it is a challenge to avoid people of bad morals! But we must, as much as possible. Yes, we must associate with people void of faith (1 Corinthians 5:9-11). But each of us can mitigate the time we spend with "bad company." It might be embarrassing at times. It might even cause loss of former friendships, especially when a friend is in the process of becoming bad. Many I know have had to sever former relationships when their friend ignored what is right.

We must be on guard because our hearts can be deceived from deep within. Deuteronomy 11:16, "*Beware that your hearts are not easily deceived, and that you do not turn away and serve other gods and worship them.*" Once a heart is deceived, it often deceives others: Isaiah 44:20, "*...a deceived heart has misled him.* Deception does not need an outside source, "*The arrogance of your heart has deceived you,*" *Obadiah 1:3.*" Likewise, 1 Corinthians 3:18 warns, "*Take care that no one deceives himself.*" Perhaps the most egregious deception is precisely that, *self-deception,*" which is usually born of the desire to ignore God's word in one's personal life.

From outside influences to internal desires, each of us must take great care not to be deceived, consciously or subconsciously and thus begin a trek that leads away from God.