

The Deception of Deception!

Yes, the deception of deception. It's not a mystery, but it is, well, a bit of an oddity, especially given our current cultural situation. It includes everything from good acting which elicits genuine tears of deep emotion to advertising which dupes us into buying their product, be it quality or not, and much more.

The thing we must remember is that actual deception is not easily recognized, *or it would not be deception!* If you recognize the deception in a con man's scheme, then it's not deception. If we see through the false claims of an ad, then we are not deceived. But advertising agents study everything from culture to psychology to find better ways to fool you and motivate you to buy their products over and above other brands of the same thing.

Like many things in modern society, enough money is at stake to tempt many companies into making false claims. Sometimes we settle for a mediocre product because it claims to be the best. Sometimes our very expectations are that few things are as good as "they" claim, so we become accustomed to lack of quality because we have learned the hard way that few things are as wonderful as claimed. There are exceptions. Example: I read recently that a man is suing a fast food chain because his burger did not look anything like the poster in the front window.

Most of the deceptive claims about daily products are not particularly serious. Maybe the new laundry detergent only got 90% of the grass stains out of the kids' jeans. Maybe the 24 hour deodorant only lasted 18 hours. Sometimes we even love deception, such as magic shows or fun fantasy movies. Other times the deception is serious, costly, or even deadly!

Spiritual deception is on a whole different level. Rather than grass stains left on the knees of blue jeans, spiritual deception can leave the black stains of sin on a precious soul for which Jesus died! Spiritual deception decorates the road to perdition with flowers and smiles or pleasure and greenbacks! Prosperity preachers call people to focus on giving so they can get. The prosperity gospel calls attention to what God can do for "me," rather than calling sin "sin" and people to repentance. A false gospel of ease, money, earthly prosperity, and pleasure dismisses Peter's words in 1 Peter 4:12-14:

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though something strange were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that at the revelation of His glory you may also rejoice and be overjoyed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory, and of God, rests upon you.

If you happen to live in a blessed place during a blessed time of history, hallelujah! If peace reigns and prosperity *accompanies* true spirituality, praise God for His precious blessings. But when we sing, "To be like Jesus, to be like Jesus, all I ask, to be like Him..." we must live that reality, both in recognizing attempted deception and walking in the light as He is in the light (1John 1:7). Always remember John 8:32, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free;" and John 17:17, "... Thy word is truth." Only then can we worship the Father in spirit and truth (John 4:23). Stay strong. Stay wise.

Ray Wallace

(Further study: Rom. 3:13; 16:18; 1 Cor. 15:33; 1 Cor. 6:9; 2 Cor. 11:3; Gal. 6:7; Col. 2:4; Titus 1:9, 10.)