

#64 “If You Are Deceived, You Do Not Know It”

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Do we honestly think that if Eve realized the severity of the consequences of her choice and that she was being tricked by the devil that she would have eaten the fruit? If she had known that the fruit would destroy the joy and paradise that she had and force her into great pain and strife, do we really think that she would follow the devil's counsel? The obvious answer should be “no.” If she had known and seen the truth, she wouldn't have sinned against God. Such is the nature of deception; it is unseen, unrealized, and, thus, dangerously deadly.

We are familiar with rebellion, the sin that God likens to witchcraft (1 Samuel 15:23). We have all rebelled against God at some point or another, when we have seen and known the right thing to do and not done it. Or, we might have known that what we were thinking about doing was wrong and yet done it anyway. In either case, we knew what we were doing, and we were willing to take our chances in going against God. These are willful sins which grieve and quench the Spirit of God and the heart of God. Rebellion isn't hard to identify because it is an “in your face” kind of sin. But deception is far more subtle. It is a sin that doesn't want to be seen for what it is. It is a temptation that wants to masquerade as wisdom and blessing. It is lust that seeks to hide its fangs. Deception is cunning, shrewd, manipulative, and deadly. It allows darkness to move in close for the kill and to kill while as yet being unrecognized. Deception can accomplish its work because the one being deceived doesn't realize his or her own imminent destruction.

For some reason, we often think of deception merely as rebellion, which it is in that it is sin, but an important distinction remains. *Deception is first unperceived temptation followed by unrecognized rebellion.* It might be that a person comes to their senses soon after they see the results of their decision. The destruction is evidence of their having been deceived, and thus they might come to their senses. Yet others may continue in deception for a long time because they ignore sin, don't care to be introspective, or value voices other than God's Word as higher or at least on par with God's Word. Then there are those who are just naïve that need to be pulled from the fire lest they destroy themselves unwittingly. Surely, we can be destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6). The more knowledge of Scripture we have that is true wisdom, the more discerning we can become and the harder it is for us to be deceived. The less understanding we have, the easier it is for us to be made victims. Deception must be avoided as much as possible as we trust God's Word lest we be made into rebels unaware.

Satan is extremely shrewd, and he masquerades as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). Not surprisingly, many false religions and cults have begun as a result of a person encountering an angel of light. Yet he is able to make sin look like good even to those who are of the one true faith. Thus, we must be on the alert, aware that we are being

preyed upon, and diligent to be in the Word. If something doesn't feel right in our souls, it is likely the Spirit telling us to beware. The Spirit is better at identifying deception than we might be, particularly as we are younger in our faith. As we grow, it is easier to pin chapter and verse on a wile of the devil, but the Spirit can always be relied upon to get our attention when we are in danger. The best response in such an instance is to flee. We should get as far away from evil as we can, and in so doing, we resist the devil such that he is really the one who flees (James 4:7).

In the case of deception and temptation, we need to escape as fast as we can. If we reason with deception, the lies might go deeper still. Satan doesn't need to be argued with and sin doesn't need to be rationalized. Deception's power is in dialogue; victory, on the other hand, is in rebuke and resistance. All Eve needed to do was to say what God said, believe it, and walk away from the serpent, but she didn't. When the devil tempted Jesus, Jesus used only a few words to respond, and they were Scripture (see Luke 4:1-13). Truth sets free from the web of deception, which might very well contain bits and pieces of Scripture pieced together into a perverted whole. Scripture uncompromised is a freeing thing (John 8:31-32), and it sets the devil to running. Praise God that there is a map and a compass for us to live this life. We don't have to rebel, and neither do we have to be deceived because we have the uncompromised, infallible, always-true, and forever-enduring Word of God to enlighten our paths along with the Spirit of God to illumine our hearts and minds to rightly apply the Word. We have all we need for life and godliness in Christ (2 Peter 1:3), and the issue is if we will listen to His leading.

In life, there are many voices telling us to do something, go somewhere, buy such-and-such, or to become this-and-that. Our minds replay voices, songs, quotes, sermons, books, and so on, but one Voice must stand authoritatively above them all, namely, Jesus Christ through His Word. May the Word of God be what replays through our minds more and more, such that we meditate upon it day and night (Joshua 1:8). Wrong thoughts must be taken captive unto obedience to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5), and right thoughts must fill our minds (Philippians 4:8). The more we are Word-saturated, Spirit-filled, and Jesus-loving, the harder we will be to deceive. May God anchor us upon His Word, and may He enable us to live free from deception and rebellion to His glory.