

Do Not Be Deceived

Introduction

1. Today, deception is pervasive - it appears across relationships, politics, business, media, and even religion.
2. However, as Dostoyevsky said, "Lying to ourselves is more deeply ingrained than lying to others."
3. Self-deception is the lie we like to tell ourselves to avoid guilt or responsibility for our actions.
4. Spiritually it is dangerous as it lies at the heart of our rebellion against God refusing to accept God's truth:
 - a. It rejects that existence of sin and need for Christ's cleansing blood - 1 John 1:8
 - b. 'Rebellion begins here: refusing to see ourselves as God sees us, thus rejecting need for repentance, grace'
 - c. Our lives prior to Christ is described as being one of self-deception - Titus 3:3
 - d. 'The self-deception here is believing that the path the alien sinner is on is good and acceptable when it is actually destructive'
5. I want to consider 3 passages where we are told "do not be deceived" and the subjects about which we are warned not to deceive ourselves.
 - a. Sin and its eternal consequences; worldly influence; actions and consequences.
6. I hope these thoughts will help us to see the importance of remaining true to God's truth and self-examination.

I. The Unrighteous Will Not Inherit Heaven - 1 Corinthians 6:9-10

- A. One of the ways we can deceive ourselves is to think we can do whatever we want, live however we want and still go to heaven.
- B. This is a common form of self-deception.
 1. Many deceive themselves into thinking that as long as I am generally a good person; I can cohabit with my partner, be a member of a false religion or a denomination, play the lottery, live a promiscuous life, pursue wealth and pleasure, and still be assured of place in heaven.
 2. People are happy to deceive themselves in this way as it gives them a sense freedom to indulge in sin without guilt or personal responsibility.
 3. "I'm really that bad a person" "I am not married but I have never been unfaithful to my partner", "I m not a Christian but I live a good moral life"; "Is God really going send people to hell, for not being a Christian; for being a member of a denomination; or for living it up?"
 4. Universalism is a doctrine teaching that everyone that has ever been born will ultimately be saved, rejecting the idea the idea of hell and eternal punishment, arguing that it goes against of a loving God.
- C. However, Paul says we are deceiving ourselves if we succumb to the belief that sin has no eternal consequences and goes on lists ten different types of people that will not inherit heaven.
 1. Paul is dealing with a situation where one brother sued another in court over, it seems, money owed.
 2. While the Paul rebukes them and the church for allowing this situation to exist, he at pains to bring to sinful brother the need to repent.
 3. This Christian may have been puffed up and minimized his sin and its consequence.
- D. However, by pointing back to their obedience to the gospel, Paul reminds them that unrepented sin causes one to lose out on heaven - 1 Cor.6:11
 1. We delude ourselves in thinking God views sins committed after baptism with greater leniency then those committed before it
 2. This false reasoning might explain that the mindset of some at Corinth: false sense of pride; a playing down of the seriousness of the sin, comparing ourselves to others, or feel that God's grace give us a license to sin.
 - a. It is important that we remain humble and penitent when confront with our sin - James 4:6-10
 - b. We must respect all of God's laws and treat each as equally important - James 2:10
 - c. The failure to address the sin in our lives will lead a forfeiture of heaven - Galatians 5:19-21
- E. **Do not be deceived;** the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God. Sin has eternal consequences!

II. Evil company corrupts good habits - 1 Corinthians 15:33

- A. It is common knowledge that the people we spend the most time greatly influence who we become.
1. Most commentators agree Paul is quoting a popular proverb or quote an ancient Greek poet, Menander.
 2. Some at Corinth were denying a future resurrection, without realizing they were denying that of Christ - cp. 15:12-16
 3. Thus, in verse 33, Paul takes this denial to its logical conclusion removing the necessity of godly living.
 4. In other words "Since there is no afterlife, then why not just enjoy ourselves; indulge in sin?"
 5. The 'evil company' here is the false teachers and those propagating their beliefs - fellow Christians.
- B. However, the principle stands that mixing with the wrong sort of people, religious or not, particularly worldly minded, will negatively affects the way we think and behave.
1. Sometimes we convince ourselves that we are beyond being influenced; that the people mixing with are not as bad as 'all that'; or we have greater powers of influence.
 2. These are just lies we tell ourselves to justify keeping bad company: our friends, even family members.
- C. The effect is that, if we ignore this truth, over time we become desensitized to sin; lose our love for God's truth; heaven becomes less attractive to us; and the assembly becomes a matter of convenience.
1. Biblical examples include Solomon seduced by his many wives; the children of Israel seduced by the Canaanites; Lot's wife looking back to the life she was leaving behind; Demas abandoning Paul for his love of the world.
 2. Whether or not Demas others returned to faithfulness, the warning is clear that bad company corrupts.
 3. Bad company will deeply affect our view of sin, our love for God; desire for heaven - desire for this world.
- D. Paul ends by telling the brethren to get 'real' - awake to righteousness! - 1 Cor.15:34
1. The answer to this self-deception, Paul says, is wake up, sober up, and don't fool yourselves.
 2. Eknepho: "...become sober; to return to soberness of mind" (Thayer).
 3. Commentators say - 'arise from stupidity' - we are foolish to believe bad company does not corrupt!
 4. "He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will suffer harm" (Proverbs 13:20).
 5. "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night" (Psalms 1:1-2 NASB).
- E. **Do not be deceived;** evil company corrupts good habits - cp. Our associations influence our actions!

III. Whatever a man sows he will reap - Galatians 6:7-8

- A. The law of sowing and reaping is an established law of nature.
1. Clarke: Whatsoever kind of grain man sows in his field, of that shall he reap; for no other species of grain can proceed from that which is sown. Darnel will not produce wheat, nor wheat, darnel.
 2. Barnes: it refers to the principle of divine administration that could not be treated with contempt or successfully evaded.
 3. RWP: Paul means an evasion of God's laws which men think to accomplish but in fact cannot.
- B. The point Paul is making is that our actions have consequences - connecting to previous: who will go to heaven, mixing with the wrong crowd.
1. Though dealing with the support of preachers, the choice before us is stark and consequential:
 2. Are we going to follow the leading of Spirit: liberal and generous in sharing; or the flesh, holding back from helping others.
 3. We are foolish and self-deceived to think that we can mock God who knows who truly are and what we are truly doing, and will judge us accordingly, if we pretend to be who we are not. We might can fool those around us, the mistake and self-deception is to think we can fool God.
 4. Achan (OT) and Ananias and Sapphira (NT) are a case in point - leaving aside the supernatural elements of the account, they inherited the consequence of their actions, and judged by God accordingly.

- C. The law of sowing and reaping reminds us of God's justice though the world is filled with seemingly counterexamples.
1. The world is filled with examples of people that are seemingly getting away it - of not reaping the consequences of their actions.
 2. As in the days of Asaph (Psalm 73), we see the prosperity of the wicked, of the false teacher, and of false religion.
 3. This can lead to great discouragement even a lost of commitment to God's moral standard.
- D. But Paul, in response, encourages us to persevere in doing what is right and good, even when the rewards are not immediately apparent, or deferred to a future time - Galatians 6:9-10
1. We will receive the consequences of our actions, for the good we do, for our faithfulness, either in this life or in the life to come.
 2. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).
 3. "Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:9-10).
- E. **Do not be deceived;** God is not mocked. Our choices have results!

Conclusion

1. As we reflect on the lesson, a consistent and sobering message emerges: self-deception is both real and spiritually dangerous.
 - a. Paul warns the Corinthians not to be deceived about the consequences of sin
 - b. The corrupting influence of bad company
 - c. The immutable principles that we reap what we sow.
2. Each passage confronts the human tendency to rationalize or ignore the truth, reminding us that God's standards do not change based on our perceptions or desires.
3. To guard against deception, or any kind of it, we must hold fast to the truth of God's word, examine our lives honestly, and remain sensitive to the Spirit's conviction.
4. Only through humility and vigilance can we avoid the subtle lie that lead us away from God's will and instead walk in integrity, righteousness, and truth.