



"The cruel pirate Satan watches for those vessels that sail without a convoy."

—George Swinnock

19-Jul-13

The Truth About Deception (Part Three)

In Part Two, we saw a handful of examples of deception throughout history and culture, ending with a question: How are we different from those who have fallen away from the truth? How do we know that at some point in the future we will not also follow a path of deception and eventual apostasy? How can we be confident that we will not be deceived?

If our answer involves our superior intellect, our broad experience, our deeper understanding, or our time in the church, [Satan](#) already has his hooks in us. If our answer involves a spiritual gift we have been given, a particular teacher or leader, or the corporate organization we are part of, the Devil, as a roaring lion, is already stalking us. If we believe it is impossible for us to be deceived—or nearly so—we would do well to remember Paul's statement: "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" ([I Corinthians 10:12](#)). All of these wrong answers involve *putting our trust in a mere man*—and typically, that mere man is oneself.

Jeremiah 17 contains several useful instructions in this regard. Verse 9 is probably the best-known verse in this chapter: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" With such a

description of the heart in us all, it is sheer folly to trust our own inner fortitude.

Earlier in the chapter, however, [God](#) gives foundational instruction when it comes to identifying the right source of confidence: "Thus says the LORD: 'Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the LORD'" ([Jeremiah 17:5](#)). If our trust, [faith](#), or confidence is in any person—and this would certainly include ourselves—God says that we are *cursed*! Such a wretched belief system cannot help but bear diseased and poisonous fruit. If we depend on human abilities—ours or someone else's—to overcome Satan and recognize and resist his devices, he will sooner or later pull one over on us.

If our trust is misplaced, the verse says our heart *departs from the LORD*, meaning we are surrendering our best and only true defense against the deceiver. Sometimes he goes for our weaknesses, yet at other times for our strengths. Sometimes his ploy is in plain view, but at other times he plays an indefinite [waiting](#) game. Who can anticipate all his methods of deception? We simply cannot foresee where he will come from—or when or how. Clearly, on our own, we are outmatched and outgunned. We need what no mortal can provide.

A couple of verses later, God gives the flipside, the only means we really have against deception: "Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is the LORD" ([Jeremiah 17:7](#)). Recall what God has done, and is doing, for us. While [the world](#) lies under the sway of the wicked one, God has freed a little flock and is actively protecting His sheep. We should not live in terror—we have not been given a spirit of fear ([II Timothy 1:6](#)). Alone, we cannot stand against Satan, but our source of strength is [Jesus Christ](#).

Walking in that relationship causes us to adopt the character image of the Father and the Son. The more that we think as They do and act as They do, the less likely we are to be taken in by Satan's subtlety, cunning, or one of his long cons. Just as we are no match for Satan, so the Devil is no match for the Father and the Son. In fact, They have already defeated him, and Their

desire is to make Their home with us—which They will do, if we [love](#) Them and keep Their words. This is what protects us from deception—our growing relationship with God and submitting to the truth at every turn.

The people who will survive the deceptions of this end time are those who have the Father and the Son as their focus—in their very being—so much that the false messiahs and prophets cannot get in the door. The ones who are kept from deception have a love of the truth (see [II Thessalonians 2:9-12](#)). Their security comes, not because of personal strength, but as a result of the protection that God gives because they have consistently demonstrated that their heartfelt desire is to live with the Father and the Son for eternity, no matter the cost in the present. So they will engage in frequent prayer, focused study of the Word of God, and occasional fasting to humble themselves and work on dislodging the hooks.

Those who will survive Satan's deceptions have their hope in God because they already know they can trust Him with their lives, regardless of what happens. Because their hope and trust are in the right place, they are blessed—and part of that blessing is the spiritual strength to resist and overcome the father of lies.

- David C. Grabbe

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[How Satan Destroys Faith](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

If our faith had been strong over the past 20 years, we would not have been scattered. Because we behave and make choices on what we believe, any affront to the belief system will alter our choices and behavior, placing us on a destructive trajectory. Satan's chief strategy is subtle deception, planting doubts by subtle little half-truths, equivocations, and deliberate lies. Among the lies Satan has foisted off on the world are: (1) God is weak and ineffectual (as seen in effeminate pictures of Jesus, crucifixes, etc.) (2) God is disinterested and has gone off somewhere. (3) God is so merciful that

anything goes (we aren't obligated to keep His law).(4) Sin is pleasurable and leads to prosperity. (5) We deserve more than we have been given. By imbibing these deceptions, we shipwreck our faith and jeopardize our salvation.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Stalked by Satan](#)

by Mike Ford

Peter describes Satan as "like a roaring lion." What made him make this comparison? Mike Ford shows that Peter's choice of predator is a very apt analogy of our Adversary.

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