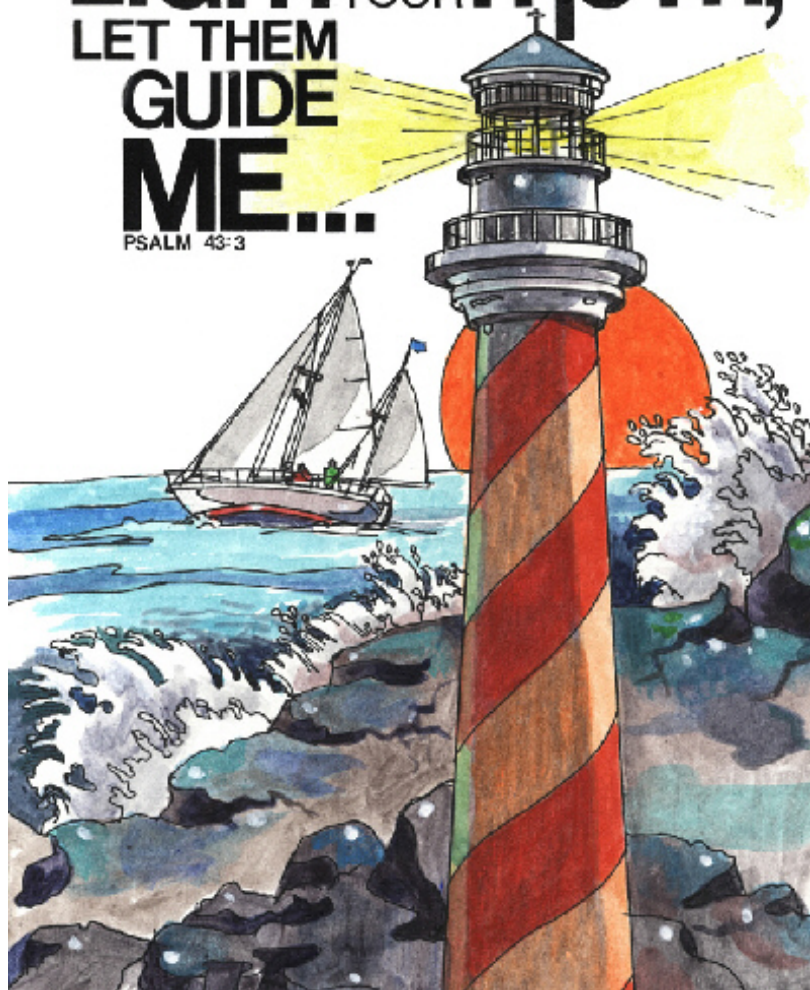


SEND FORTH YOUR
LIGHT AND YOUR **TRUTH,**
LET THEM
GUIDE
ME...

PSALM 43:3



Sabbath Service
Saturday, January 20, 2007



Sabbath Service — Saturday, January 20, 2007

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CALL TO WORSHIP

Holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
the whole earth is full of God's glory.

**We give you thanks, O God, with all our hearts
for your steadfast love and faithfulness.**

Your name, O God, is exalted over all things,
and your word goes forth to the ends of the earth.

**When we call to you, O God, you answer,
and preserve our lives in the midst of trouble.**

You stretch out your hand to deliver us,
and fulfill your purposes through us.

**We will sing of the ways of God,
for great is the glory of God forever.**

INVITATION

Come to us, O God, when we are discouraged and afraid. Fill us with the vision of your majesty and the reality of your care. Touch our feelings as well as our understanding, that we may walk by faith as well as by knowledge and trust in you even when the way before us is not clear. Amen.

OPENING HYMN #85

"God is Most Gracious, Kind and Good"

Psalm 52

Dwight Armstrong

O mighty man, why boast you of evil,
Scheming and devising subtle mischief and lies?
Like a sharp razor does your tongue speak;
Planning destruction against godly men.
You despise good and evil do you love;
Falsehood do you prefer to speaking the truth.

Why do you boast when God is most gracious,
Kind and merciful and ever loving and good?
Since you trust in falsehood and your great wealth;
God will remove you, uproot you from life.
Those who trust God shall see and be in awe;
They shall laugh at you for all your folly and pride.

O see the man who made not God his strength.
For he sought refuge in abundance of wealth.
But in God's mercy, in His steadfast love,
And His great kindness, in these do I trust.
And in God's house, like an olive green am I;
I will praise Him and proclaim His great name!

OPENING PRAYER

Great are you, O Lord, and greatly to be praised; great is your power, and your wisdom is infinite. You would we praise without ceasing. You call us to delight in your praise, for you have made us for yourself, and our hearts find no rest until we rest in you; in whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit all glory, praise, and honor be ascribed, both now and forevermore. Amen.

MOMENTS OF SILENCE

PERSONAL PRAYER

HYMN #140 *"Sing to the Lord with Cheerful Voice"*

Psalm 100
Dwight Armstrong

All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.
Serve Him with joy, His praises tell,
Come ye before Him and rejoice.
And know the Lord is God indeed;
Without our aid he did us make:
We are His flock, He doth us feed,
And for His sheep He doth us take.

O enter then His gates with praise,
Gaily approach unto His courts;
Praise Him and bless His name always,
For it is seemly so to do.
For God the Lord is ever good,
His mercy is for ever sure;
His truth at all times firmly stood,
And shall from age to age endure.

PRESENTATIONS BEFORE GOD

ANNOUNCEMENTS

COLLECT

Grant light to our eyes and strength to our souls as you touch us once more with your word of truth. Appear to us here as the risen Christ came to the disciples, that our lives may be made whole and our work for you become productive. In Jesus' name. Amen.

THE LESSON

Are We Deceived?

New International Version (NIV) of the Bible used unless otherwise noted.

What is true and what is truth? Without a clear—or at least clearer—perspective on truth, we might be deceived.

Today let's briefly touch on a topic of incredible importance, namely, the *nature of deception and deceit*. As we will see, there are several perspectives one can examine around this topic. For example, we might be deceived by another, but we ourselves can also deceive others. And of course, we can deceive ourselves. Yet all these involve a lie and the creation of an illusion to disguise the truth.

How do we know when someone is deceiving us? Surely there aren't people in the world that would do that to us, are there? We all want to feel trusting towards others, but often do so at our own peril, because we haven't assessed the extent to which a person is worthy of that trust. We believe that by trusting we will encourage trust, but deception doesn't play by those rules. Indeed, we may have deceived ourselves that others won't deceive us. So we see here a connection between self-deception and deception by others.

FALSE PROPHETS

What do the Scriptures have to say about this topic?

Matthew 24:11, 24 — and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people [*so deception is one of a number of things that occur at the end time, along with the loss of love and affection*].

(24) For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect — if that were possible.

There is quite a warning here for the elect, such is the extent of the deception. What is it about? It is about worshipping an entity that masquerades as Christ and following a person and what that person teaches when his teaching is not true; that is, people present themselves as prophets, but falsely. The parallel verse in Luke offers an additional insight:

Luke 21:8 — He replied: “Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and, ‘The time is near.’ Do not follow them.

What an enigma! The time may indeed be drawing close—they are right!—but we are not to follow them. Why not?

Colossians 2:8 — See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

How are we to know what is filled with deception and deceit, and what is not? How can we be certain? The nature of deceit and deception is that they disguise the truth, and yet masquerade as the truth at the same time. Their very nature seeks to hide their reality. What are we to do?

The prophet Jeremiah was confronted with this sad reality:

Jeremiah 14:12-16 — Although they fast, I will not listen to their cry; though they offer burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Instead, I will destroy them with the sword, famine and plague.” (13) But I said, “Ah, Sovereign LORD, the prophets keep telling them, ‘You will not see the sword or suffer famine. Indeed, I will give you lasting peace in this place’.” (14) Then the LORD said to me, “The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I have not sent them or appointed them or spoken to them. They are prophesying to you false visions, divinations, idolatries and the delusions of their own minds. (15) Therefore, this is what the LORD says about the prophets who are prophesying in my name: I did not send them, yet they are saying, ‘No sword or famine will touch this land.’ Those same prophets will perish by sword and famine. (16) And the people they are prophesying to will be thrown out into the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and sword. There will be no one to bury them or their wives, their sons or their daughters. I will pour out on them the calamity they deserve.

Does this seem fair? People duped by deception still receive the repercussions of their deception! Why would God act so harshly? (also check out **Jeremiah 23:25-32** in regard to the false claims of prophets of being led by God.)

We always need to remember this fundamental scripture:

Jeremiah 17:9-10 — The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? (10) “I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve.”

We know God is a perfectly loving and just God. There is something about those who are deceived that permits the deception. Notice some of the scriptures immediately preceding this verse in Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 17:5-8 — This is what the LORD says: “Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD. (6) He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives. (7) “But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. (8) He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.”

Such a contrast! One trusts in man, the other in God. The results are profound. If we indeed trusted in God, would we trust in man and therefore fall for the deception and deceit of a false teacher? So where does deception start?

SIN AND DECEPTION

Romans 7:11 — For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death.

Sin produces a *distortion of perception* so that we fail to see clearly what has really happened. This is why sin can easily be justified by our minds. That is part of the self-deception. Without God’s Spirit to stimulate our consciences, we end up lying to ourselves—and this is where sin and its deception take root. The law and the clarity it should bring to us have been quenched, and deception and deceit have entered.

What would lead us to make such a terrible error of judgment?

Ephesians 4:22 — You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;

Lusts are unlawful desires. They are things we want but shouldn’t have. Why? Because we believe they will offer us hope and bring satisfaction and comfort. That is why they are deceitful: they can’t and never will offer those things. The answer?

Ephesians 4:23-25 — to be made new in the attitude of your minds; (24) and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. (25) Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

Deception and deceit are bedfellows of the lie—mostly to ourselves. Once we have deceived ourselves, how easy it is to be led astray by anyone who might attempt to deceive us, especially to follow the same lusts! Notice:

Romans 16:17-18 — I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. (18) For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites [basic carnal desires]. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.

There is a connection between self-deception and covetousness. To see our hopes in anything but God is to hope in futility. To hope in what is futile is to distort our thinking, to not see what is real from what is not real, and to lie to ourselves. This is illustrated in the idolater:

Isaiah 44:14-20 — He cut down cedars, or perhaps took a cypress or oak. He let it grow among the trees of the forest, or planted a pine, and the rain made it grow. (15) It is man's fuel for burning; some of it he takes and warms himself, he kindles a fire and bakes bread. But he also fashions a god and worships it; he makes an idol and bows down to it. (16) Half of the wood he burns in the fire; over it he prepares his meal, he roasts his meat and eats his fill. He also warms himself and says, "Ah! I am warm; I see the fire." (17) From the rest he makes a god, his idol; he bows down to it and worships. He prays to it and says, "Save me; you are my god." (18) They know nothing, they understand nothing; their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see, and their minds closed so they cannot understand. (19) No one stops to think, no one has the knowledge or understanding to say, "Half of it I used for fuel; I even baked bread over its coals, I roasted meat and I ate. Shall I make a detestable thing from what is left? Shall I bow down to a block of wood?" (20) He feeds on ashes, a deluded heart misleads him; he cannot save himself, or say, "Is not this thing in my right hand a lie [he can't acknowledge that he believes in emptiness]?"

Everyone has a religion. Even professing agnostics believe in a whole range of things that constitute a religion, although they wouldn't necessarily think of it in those terms. What do we believe in? Where have we set our hearts? Where do our real hopes lie? This environment encourages us to say things that will ensure that we receive support, but is it merely rhetoric, a kind of lip service where *we lie* to others and ourselves?

DECEIT AND OPPRESSION

There is also a connection between deceit and deception and oppression, as we can note:

Hosea 12:7 — The merchant uses dishonest scales; he loves to defraud.

Micah 6:11-12 — Shall I acquit a man with dishonest scales, with a bag of false weights? (12) Her rich men are violent; her people are liars and their tongues speak deceitfully.

Proverbs 26:24-26, 28 — A malicious man disguises himself with his lips, but in his heart he harbors deceit. (25) Though his speech is charming, do not believe him, for seven abominations fill his heart. (26) His malice may be concealed by deception, but his wickedness will be exposed in the assembly. (28) A lying tongue hates those it hurts, and a flattering mouth works ruin.

You may have heard of the Senate Inquiry into slavery conducted in the US in 2000. It revealed that up to two million women and children are abducted into slavery every year, many responding to offers to work in the US, only to be forced into prostitution and unpaid labor, with all the trappings of beatings, rape, no contact with the outside world, no voice to hear them. Two hundred and fifty cases have been brought to trial, but the sentences were light because the laws are weak. Why was that? Because of corruption in legal circles. Deceit and deception seek to further their own cause, to serve their own lusts for wealth and power and for every vile thing, no matter how many lives are ruined in the process. We are not to be naive to the potential for deceit and deception.

THE SOURCE OF DECEPTION

Who is the source of all this?

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 — For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. (14) And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. (15) It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

John 8:43-45 — Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. (44) You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (45) Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me!

So we have come back to these points: if we are filled with deceit, we cannot recognize the truth. If we are filled with deceit, we will be led away by our own lusts. If we are drawn to idols, we will be deceived by others who proclaim those idols as the truth.

Worshipping the One true God, and Him alone, is central to all this—and to life. Notice during Christ’s encounter with Satan how Satan, using deceit, attempted to entice Him from the only God and His Truth.

Matthew 4:3-10 — The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” (4) Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God’.” (5) Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. (6) “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written: “ ‘He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone’.” (7) Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test’.” (8) Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. (9) “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” (10) Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only’.”

Here we see good overcoming evil, clarity of vision and perception, no self-deception or deceit, and the ability to see clearly and flawlessly the nature of the traps Satan was laying. It was really no contest!

FREE FROM DECEIT

Not only could Christ detect deceit with such clarity, but He also perceived those free of deceit:

John 1:47-49 — When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, “Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false.” (48) “How do you know me?” Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.”

Not only could Christ recognise Nathanael’s lack of deceit, but Nathan in turn could recognise Christ as the Son of God!

(49) Then Nathanael declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.”

The apostle Paul likewise had this ability:

Acts 13:7-10 — who was an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The proconsul, an intelligent man, sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God. (8) But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith. (9) Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy

Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, (10) “You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord?”

No hesitation in seeing what was happening. We have to become like that. Or do we think that it is reserved for Jesus and Paul?

Zephaniah 3:13 — The remnant of Israel will do no wrong; they will speak no lies, nor will deceit be found in their mouths. They will eat and lie down and no one will make them afraid.”

Ephesians 4:14-15 — Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. (15) Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

WARNINGS

There are some specific warnings related to not being deceived. Let’s look at some of these.

- Not being deceived by our own wisdom:

1 Corinthians 3:18-21 — Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a “fool” so that he may become wise. (19) For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s sight. As it is written: “He catches the wise in their craftiness”; (20) and again, “The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile.” (21) So then, no more boasting about men! All things are yours,

People typically become a little wiser with age. Hopefully, we start to learn from all our youthful errors. But that’s not really the wisdom we are speaking of here. To boast at the wisdom of experience is an empty boast.

- Not being deceived as to God’s view of these things:

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 — Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders (10) nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

- Not being deceived about the impact others can have on us:

1 Corinthians 15:33 — Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.”

- Realizing that our actions do produce results—good or bad:

Galatians 6:7 — Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

PUTTING AWAY DECEIT

We are to approach God’s Word with the attitude of wanting to grow in grace and knowledge, not hiding anything from God or from ourselves, ready to lay ourselves bare before Him, without secret sins, seeing and *seeking the Truth in truth*.

1 Peter 2:1-2 — Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. (2) Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,

Let us note the approach Job took to this:

Job 31:5-8 — “If I have walked in falsehood or my foot has hurried after deceit — (6) let God weigh me in honest scales and he will know that I am blameless — (7) if my steps have turned from the path, if my heart has been led by my eyes, or if my hands have been defiled, (8) then may others eat what I have sown, and may my crops be uprooted.

We started by looking at conditions at the end of the age, recalling **Matthew 24:11**, that “many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.”
And:

Matthew 24:24 — For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect — if that were possible.

In the last days, deception and deceit will indeed reach new levels. How will the people of God respond?

Revelation 14:4-5 — These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb. (5) No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.

CLOSING HYMN #70

“Amazing Grace”

John Newton, 1779
Edwin O. Excell (1851-1921)

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.

‘Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
’Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

When we’ve been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise
Than when we’d first begun.

CLOSING WORDS

The God of peace go with you into the world,
equipping you for the work God calls you to do.
Listen for the will of God and dare to follow it,
that God may be praised in the good you do.
Grace to you and peace from God our Father,
and from the Sovereign Jesus Christ.
Amen.