

The Great Deception

Did you know that the majority of people who will end up in Hell will do so under the guise that they're a good person, or at least good enough?

And the reality? Satan is behind it all.

Remember, Satan is called "*an angel of light*" (2Cor 11:14). If we saw him and heard him speak, we would immediately be tempted to follow him, without reservation. His beauty and charisma would be overwhelming to us. And without the Word of God as our defense, we would be certain he is saying good things for our benefit!

2Cor 11:14 *And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.*

Accordingly, his servants in this world "*disguise themselves as servants of righteousness*" (2Cor 11:15), often in the name of religion, **to deceive people into thinking they can be good enough on their own before God.**

We're all born with a sin nature that loves to believe that we're good enough on our own, or at least better than the next guy. So, we get puffed up based on pseudo-righteousness.

Gal 6:3 *For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.*

Our "flesh" wants nothing more than to be heralded as a good person, regardless of whether or not others are telling us the whole truth.

While there might be some "good" things about us, at least compared to other people, compared to God, there is NOTHING good about us on our own, being sinners. The Word of God is crystal clear on this.

Rom 3:10-12 *as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."*

Rom 3:23 *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

The difficult thing is that **NOBODY WANTS TO HEAR THIS.**

What is this thing people cling to that is going to lead so many to the Lake of Fire one day? There's a name for it.

It's called **self-made religion (self-righteousness), or religiosity**, and it will be the downfall of many, just as it was in the days of Jesus when He tried to tell people of this great deception.

Luke 13:1-5 *There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse*

*sinner*s than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they **were worse offenders** than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

Oh, how we love to compare ourselves to others in hopes of justifying ourselves!

But here, Jesus reminds us that we're all guilty of this.

This was the curse the Pharisees brought upon themselves in Jesus' day. They couldn't resist elevating themselves due to their intellect and positions of power. They fell for **the trap of pride**, the same one Satan fell for before mankind was even created (**Isa 14:12-16**).

Unfortunately, there are many modern-day Pharisees, who might not even be traditionally religious, who might not even go to church; but they make themselves gods in their own minds. They arrogantly elevate themselves to the level of God.

Look at the warnings about self-made religion in Paul's letter to the Colossians:

Col 2:8-9 *See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,*

Col 2:18-23 *Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.*

If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— "Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch" (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

Every world religion I can think of, besides biblical Christianity, is based on pleasing God with one's own human efforts (don't believe me? - do some research on your own regarding how they teach you can be saved and go to heaven).

Only biblical Christianity reveals that sinful man can only be saved by the grace of God.

False religions are based on a wrong belief that man can somehow, someway, make things right with God on his own... even though deep down he KNOWS he's not perfect and therefore any attempt to do so is futile.

Now, because this type of “religion” appeals to the pride of his flesh, man gives into it as though it just might be true.

This malady infects many church-going people today who think they're all set with God based on their own merits.

Oh, what a horrible deception religious thinking is!!

This is why we must tell people the truth of the Gospel while there's still breath in our lungs. We must tell people, out of love, of the desperate need for the Savior that we are all born with.

And even though this will offend some, do not be dismayed, we're on the right track, and we're in good company!

Jesus offended more people than anyone who ever lived. Why? Because out of love, he told them the truth. His contemporaries ended up murdering him for it.

We must be willing to be treated like an enemy in exchange for telling people the truth and saving some from the great judgment of God. (**Gal 4:16**)

Let's take hold of our Lord's encouragement:

John 15:18-20 *“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they*

persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.

Ultimately, if people think they're good enough on their own, denying their need for the Savior, the Son of God Himself, they put themselves under the greatest judgment possible without even realizing it (Read Joh 3:18,36, 8:21-24)!

This is why religion, or religious thinking, is such a great deception in the world and always has been. May we have the courage to tell people the truth in the power of the Holy Spirit, leaving the results up to the Lord.

In reality, only the Spirit of Jesus can convict people of their need to be saved from their sins. But He can and will use us, by grace, to plant seeds in people's souls.

1 Cor 3:6-7 *I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but **only God** who gives the growth.*

Lord God, Heavenly Father, have mercy on us all and open the eyes of the blind that they may see. We thank You for Your amazing grace in giving up for us Your one and only Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Eph 2:8-10 *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for*

good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

AMEN.