



Deceit is Hard to Detect, Therefore Dangerous.

By Alvin Erickson
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Most of us tend to believe we are above being deceived. For us, deceit is something we are good at spotting. It is not a big problem for us because it seems so obvious when it appears. Some of us might go as far as believing we are good at detecting what is going on, with situations, with people. In other words, some might say I don't need any help when it comes to deceit. My eyes are wide open.

Before we come to a final conclusion on our ability to sniff out deceit, there is a Bible story we need to come to terms with. It is one most people don't know, maybe have never heard of in any way unless they have read the Bible from cover to cover. It is the story of a man of God who is never named and it is found in I Kings 13. When King Jeroboam of the northern kingdom had sinned against the Lord by building altars and appointing priests who were not Levites, he was confronted by this man of God of Judah who said these new priests would be sacrificed on the altar and the altar torn down. King Jeroboam then stretched out his hand and called out, "Seize him". But his hand withered. The altar was then torn down. King Jeroboam asked the man of God that his hand might be restored and it was.

So, the king asked the man of God to come dine with him but the man of God said he was commanded by the Lord not to eat or drink and to return by another route. Having carried out his assignment, the man of God sets out to return home. Now here is where it gets tricky. An old prophet has him be intercepted and brought to the old prophet's home. The word from this old prophet is that an angel had spoken to him and told him to bring the man of God into your house that he might eat and drink. So, the man of God heard this and believed he could now eat and drink and so he did. At this time the word of God came to the old prophet and he said to the man of God, "Because you have disobeyed the word of the Lord and have not kept the commandment that the Lord your God commanded you, but have come back and eaten food and drank water, your body shall not come to your ancestral tomb. When the man of God leaves and on his way home, he is killed by a lion. He had been deceived believing the Lord had withdrawn his commandment to not eat or drink.

Here is how Martin Luther talks about deceit and it seems to fit this story of the man of God. "But how can we keep from being deceived, since some of the deceptions which come our way are very compelling. How can we keep from being misled? To learn such mastery or art requires that we truly be Christians. First of all, we must recognize that the devil is a very crafty and powerful lord-that's why he is called lord and ruler of the world! - and that if our dear Lord and God does not counter and thwart his



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craftiness, -cleverness, and power, there would be no one on earth wise, strong, and holy enough to withstand and survive against him. That is to say, with his knowledge, smartness, and power the devil far exceeds all human understanding and mental power. If God, therefore, were to withdraw his hand, the devil would quickly contrive an apparition before our eyes and take us in before we know it.” **From a sermon on the twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity.**

The challenge of detecting deceit is shown clearly in Paul’s letter to the Galatians. The Galatian Christians had come to believe that they as Gentiles could benefit by being circumcised as though this would enhance their acceptance before God. Paul severely warns them not to rebuild on an old foundation of law that would detour them off from the free gift of salvation he had proclaimed to them, that believing what Christ did for them on the cross was all they needed to have. To try to gain anything more would cancel out what had been given to them. So, they had been deceived and must not follow the declarations of people who were deceiving them.

Here is the truth. We are suckers for being deceived whether we like it or not. We become helpless in our own ability to actually perceive all of what is going on. Satan, the father of lies, (John 8:44) is way ahead of us. That is why we need words from the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures that are a lamp to our feet and a light to my path. (Psalm 11:105). Jesus says in John 8:31: If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” If we have been given the truth which we have, then that becomes our reference point from which we can discern what is false and deceiving. There are all kinds of voices in the world like those of the old prophet. They look good. They sound good. But like the man of God found out too late, they are corrupting what God has given to us to believe and follow.

As an example of how this applies in the modern world, 68 % of young men in America are said to be going to a pornography website at least once a week. Now what is happening here? Is there any recognition that these young men are being deceived? What if an Internet pornographer is actually an entrapper? He is using a very special bait—attractive women with attractive bodies. So, a young man who is turned on by what is visual is going to be wanting to look. But that pornographer has another advantage as well.

Men have a certain fantasy that some good-looking woman will want them, want to invite them into an intimate relationship. So according to John Eldredge in **Wild at Heart**, it does not take a lot to fool a young man into thinking that here it is. This woman is showing herself to me in a personal way. She is fulfilling my fantasy. Of course, when we stand back, we realize whatever woman the fellow is looking at has no interest in the guy viewing her on the Internet. In fact, she is probably disgusted with her customers, might even despise them. After all she is being used and dehumanized. It could well be that she is there because she herself was deceived or trafficked. So here we have another case of Satan winning because every one of those young men are just that much closer to becoming sexually addicted or are already. They are like at the gate of a concentration camp checking themselves in. Their future spouses, marriages and kids are going to be that much more at risk. A great deal of unnecessary trauma and heartache is waiting in the wings.