

Articles and Sermons :: Everything is Not What it Seems by Anton Bosch**Everything is Not What it Seems by Anton Bosch - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2018/4/9 18:47**

Have you ever come across any of the following?

- The sister who repeatedly tells you to correct her when she is wrong but when you do correct her, gets angry and defensive.
- The "holiness preacher" who lives a life of immorality.
- The teacher who is adamant that he is not this or that, yet his statement of faith and his preaching reveals him to be what he denies.
- The brother who tells you how much he loves and appreciates you, while defaming you to others.
- The preacher who rants against speculating and going beyond Scripture while doing exactly that in the same breath.
- The church that claims to be Bible based yet its doctrines and practices are far from biblical.
- The missionary who says he is not asking for money while asking for money.

These are only a few examples that I recently observed, and obviously, they are a small sample of many other such "anomalies". However, they are not anomalies. They are lies and deceptions!

The problem of deception began in the Garden of Eden when the serpent deceived Eve (2Corinthians 11:3) and continues right through human history to the last deluded church (Revelation 3:17). It is bound up in the human heart: "The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9), and it finds its lowest manifestation when Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss "the highest expression of friendship in that culture. Every single church addressed in the NT was affected by deception of one kind or another. Why should you, and your church, be any different? In fact, Paul warns that the closer we get to the end the worse it will be: "But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." (2 Timothy 3:13).

The dozens of warnings to Christians of the dangers of deception in almost every book of the New Testament should be more than enough to keep us alert, but alas, it does not. Every day believers are deceived by some trick of the devil. He is after all the arch deceiver, appearing as such in the opening chapters of the Bible and being identified seven times as the deceiver in the last book of the Bible (Revelation 12:9, 20:10 etc). However, he does not do the dirty work himself but uses people to mislead others.

One of the reasons why so many are caught is the very nature of deception. No one is hoodwinked by a deceiver who boldly proclaims that he is a deceiver and has the intent of cheating someone. Deception must fool the unwary into believing that the deception is not deception. As is often said, the devil does not present himself as having a tail, horns and a pitchfork, but he presents himself as a minister of the gospel; "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works." (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

One of the tricks that seems to be working very well for the enemy, is that those believers who have not bought into wholesale deception are so focused on the obvious frauds like the TV evangelists, prosperity preachers and the major cults that they have become unaware of the deceivers that have crept right into the midst of the remnant and who present themselves as "ministers of righteousness". They have even infiltrated so-called discernment circles!

But even when we see someone being less than honest in some area, we feel we should give them the benefit of the doubt since they are basically good people, or they have convinced us that they are "one of us". But, here is the problem: deception is like leaven. It can never be isolated to one area of someone's life but it permeates the whole of the

person so that his whole life becomes one big lie! 2Timothy 3:13 warns that such are "deceiving and being deceived". The moment you try to deceive others, the disease begins to infect you so that you become as deceived as those you are deceiving. Many people wonder whether false prophets know that they are frauds? I don't believe they do. They sincerely believe that they are doing the Lord's work because the sin of deceit has infected them and they have become deceived themselves. That is why they are so convincing 'they have been persuaded themselves.

Men do not have to start with false doctrine in order to become deceived, but unrepented sin, often the sin of disobedience, is deceptive and leads to further deception: "but exhort one another daily, while it is called Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. (Hebrews 3:13). Sin is deceptive and leads to a hardened heart which results in further sin, and often, wrong doctrine.

Deceiving others is a terrible thing, but self-deception has to be the worst form of fraud. Yet the Bible frequently warns of the danger of deceiving oneself (1Corinthians 3:18; James 1:22,26; 1John 1:8; etc). Except for the grace of God, one who is self-deluded cannot see the lie by which he has become ensnared. Isaiah 44:20: "A deceived heart has turned him aside; And he cannot deliver his soul, Nor say, 'Is there not a lie in my right hand?'"

My appeal to you, is not to allow any man to deceive you and "Let no one cheat you of your reward" (Colossians 2:18). If you are aware of some dishonesty or manipulation of the truth by someone you respect, immediately withdraw your confidence in that person (I'm not referring to "honest mistakes" but explicit dishonesty). If they will be dishonest in one area, they will be in others also. How can you trust such a person?

My second appeal is not to deceive yourself. The antidote to self-deception is brutal honesty and a willingness to face the facts about yourself, no matter how painful. It is only as we bring these things to the light, that the deception is exposed. "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." (1John 1:5-7)

Let's resolve to follow Paul's example in 2Corinthians 4:2: "But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

<http://antonbosch.org/everything-is-not-what-it-seems>