

“Be Not Deceived”

Paul uses the expression, “*Be not deceived*” three times in his epistles. “Deceived” is variously translated as “seduce,” “err,” “astray” and “wander.” Obviously, Paul did not want his readers to be seduced or to be lead to wander. We are going to examine the occurrences of this phrase to see what concerned Paul enough to issue a written warning.

First, he wrote in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, “*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.*” Some people believe that they can act in any way they want and still make it to heaven. Paul denies the doctrine by proclaiming that several sins will indeed condemn someone. It is worthy to note that all of these sins are put on the “same level.” The Lord considers them all serious enough to cause the condemnation of the soul. These verses also condemn the idea that sins such as homosexuality are acceptable to God even though they are culturally popular.

Second, 1 Corinthians 15:33 says, “*Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.*” Paul had written in great detail concerning the consequences if the dead are not raised in 1 Corinthians 15. Before moving on to the topic of our bodily form in the resurrection, he issued the above warning. We often apply this warning to young people and encourage them to pick good friends. Although this is a wise strategy, this is not the apostle’s main concern. The primary thrust of the “evil communications” is false doctrine. It corrupts “good manners” or “good morals.” No one can please God and follow false doctrine. The two are mutually exclusive.

Third, “*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*” (Galatians 6:7). Paul speaks of supporting the Lord’s servant as a mutual sharing in vs. 6. As the teacher shares the word, the congregation monetarily shares with the teacher (cf. Romans 15:27). The specific advice of vs. 6 is expanded in vs. 7 to benevolence in general. “A man reaps what he sows” is the principle that ties everything together. This is an immutable law of God, which the phrase “*God is not mocked*” emphasizes. Consequently, though people may fool themselves, by sowing little but expecting much, they cannot fool God. The results of their poor sowing will be manifested. Those who spend their money gratifying their flesh will reap a fleshly harvest. On the other hand, those who use their money to promote spirituality will reap a bountiful harvest. Although the primary application of this principle is to money, it also applies to the use of one’s time and talents.

Will you be deceived or lead astray? Jesus said, "*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves*" (Matthew 7:15). Follow Paul's warnings and "*be not deceived.*"

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