

OVERCOMING SPIRITUAL DECEPTION
Part I: The Deceivers, The Deceptions And The Deceived
(2 Timothy 3:1, 13 et al.)

I. Introduction

- A. In 2 Timothy 3:1, 13, the Apostle Paul predicted that in the latter days, evil people and impostors would go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. Evidence abounds that this prediction is being fulfilled.
- B. We thus do a four-part study on overcoming spiritual deception, and in the first part, 2 Timothy 3:1, 13 with other Scriptures tell us important truths about the deceivers, the deceptions and the deceived for our insight.

II. The Deceivers, The Deceptions And The Deceived, 2 Timothy 3:1, 13 et al.

- A. Characteristics about the deceivers are revealed in 2 Timothy 3:1, 13 with 3:6-8; Exodus 7:10-8:18:
 - 1. Deceivers often try to control the hearts and minds of their victims: the context of 2 Timothy 3:1, 13 at 3:6-8 reveals that they will creep into homes to take control of women who are led about by various lusts.
 - 2. Deceivers try to discredit the ministries of God's true messengers like Pharaoh's magicians Jannes and Jambres tried to do to Moses' ministry in Exodus 7:10-13, 19-22; 8:6-7 only to be exposed in time to be imposters as those men were exposed in Exodus 8:16-18 (2 Timothy 3:8-9).
 - 3. Spiritual deceivers are often entrapped by their own efforts to deceive so that they themselves end up being more deeply deceived to their harm and dishonor, 2 Timothy 3:1, 13b (B. K. C., N. T., p. 757).
- B. The deceptions that spiritual deceivers practice usually involve a progressive shift away from truth into error:
 - 1. 2 Timothy 3:1, 13 reveals that deceivers will progress from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.
 - 2. 2 John 9 KJV describes an apostate who "transgresseth," a translation of the Greek verb *proago*, "go too far" (Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 708-709), what the NIV renders "runs ahead" and the ESV "goes on ahead." For example, the School of Alexandria (fourth century) practiced the non-literal interpretation of Scripture, leading to Amillennialism and Post-tribulationism with the view that the Church replaces Israel. (John F. Walvoord, The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation, 1976, p. 12-15)
 - 3. Jude 3 directs believers to contend earnestly for the truth that was "once for all" (*hapax*, Ibid., p. 80) entrusted to God's people. Jude thus implied that false teachers were shifting away from the truth under the pretense that it needed to "be replaced." Reverend Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church (Moonies) and Muhammad's Islam are two religions that have sought to replace Christianity with their beliefs.
 - 4. In 2 Timothy 2:17-18, Paul warned Timothy that Hymenaeus and Philetus errantly taught that the resurrection was past, harming the faith of some. They did what "preterist" theologians today do in teaching that the prophecies in Revelation were fulfilled in the early history of the Church. (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, p. 1785, Introduction to the Revelation to John: Interpretation)
 - 5. In 1 Timothy 1:18-20, Paul warned Timothy to keep hold to faith and a good conscience, entities that Hymenaeus and Philetus failed to do so that they suffered eventual shipwreck to their Christian faith.
- C. Characteristics of those who are deceived are also revealed in Scripture passages (as follows):
 - 1. 2 Timothy 3:1, 13 with 3:6-8 reveal that deceived people are led away by various lusts, meaning they are operate by their sinful natures and not by the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16, 19-23).
 - 2. Such people always learn but are never able to acknowledge the truth (2 Tim. 3:7), for God's truth is revealed by the Holy Spirit, but the carnal do not function by the Spirit, so they stay ignorant, 1 Cor. 2:14.
- D. Thus, the antidote to deceivers and deceptions is for the believer in Christ to fellowship with the Lord:
 - 1. Paul called Timothy to hold fast to the form of sound words that he had heard from Paul through relying by faith on the Holy Spirit Who indwells the believer, 2 Timothy 1:13-14 with Galatians 5:16.
 - 2. 1 Corinthians 2:14-16 reveals that carnal people cannot accept God's truths where the believer who relies on the Spirit not only discerns the truth, but he can discern ungodliness in other people around him!
 - 3. Thus, the believer needs to apply Galatians 5:16, 19-23 to rely on the Holy Spirit to avoid deception.

Lesson: (1) Deceivers (a) try to control the vulnerable, (b) discredit the ministries of God's true servants and (c) are often entrapped by their own deceptions to their eventual harm and humiliation. (2) Their deceptions tend to keep shifting from truth into deeper levels of error. (3) The deceived function by their sin natures, leaving them vulnerable to deception. (4) To avoid deception, the believer must rely by faith on the Holy Spirit of truth.

Application: May we rely on Scripture and the indwelling Holy Spirit to discern deceivers, discern their deceptions, and avoid falling prey to harmful spiritual deception.