

## Be on your Guard

*“For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. But there were also false prophets among them just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them,”*

(II Peter 1:21-2:1)

I'm sure we all have fallen for a good sales pitch only to find that what we bought was not all that it was supposed to be. But of all the cons we could fall for, the worst is falling prey to the greatest con artist of all time. In II Corinthians 11:3, Paul writes about the original counterfeit, “But I am afraid, that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.” Who is he? Who is this serpent? Jesus tells us about him, “He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and is the father of lies” (John 8:44). Wow, those are tough words, but remember, Jesus is exposing the liar of all liars so we can hold to the truth and not be led astray.

Let me give you four characteristics of the Satan con so it will help you identify the spirit of this age. First he deceived Eve by his craftiness or cunning lies. That means that he knows how to get you to question the Word of God. We used to say, “The Bible says it, I believe it and that settles it!” We were not wishy washy about our faith. Today many people look at the Word of God and debate whether it works or not. Not only that, many bend the truth and think it’s perfectly fine. To Adam and Eve, the Lord said do not eat of that tree, period, end of discussion. Satan got her to look at it and question whether the word was accurate. Don’t water down his word. Keep it pure and simple.

Secondly, Satan deceived Eve by exploiting her weakness. He kept calling her attention to the tree and how nice it looked. The enemy will find your weakness and keep after it. He wants to bring you down or make you feel so guilty that you feel unworthy to serve the Lord, or tell others about him, or step forward and help in the church body. Satan is in the business of knowing his subjects so that he can find and exploit their weaknesses. But thanks be to God, he is our strength in weakness (II Corinthians 12: 9-10).

Thirdly, Paul warns that our minds can be deceived. Satan targets the mind. Once the mind has been deceived the emotions will follow. Hey, it can’t be bad if it feels so good! Unfortunately a lot of things may feel good but they are not: getting buzzed on booze or drugs, adultery, getting ahead by cheating, gossip and picking on someone else so you feel better about yourself. Once we start compromising the mind dulls to the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Ask for a fresh touch of fire to empower your soul!

Lastly, Satan doesn’t do everything himself. He delegates his deceit. “For such men are false Apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as Apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It’s not surprising then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve” (II Corinthians 11:13-15). Stop, examine what others tell you. Don’t just blindly accept any so-called truth. Surround yourself with godly friends and mentors who will speak the truth in love.