

Deception

In the last days, there will arise:

¹³ For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. ¹⁵ Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15

We should not marvel at this, but we should be on guard against such (what does it mean to be on-guard?). Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light, v 14.

In recent years, several high-profile Christian leaders have faced significant falls from grace due to moral failures, financial misconduct, and abuse of power. These scandals often lead to resignations, the collapse of global ministries, and *a profound impact on their congregations*.



Firebrand Magazine

The founder of one of America's largest megachurches resigned in June 2024 after admitting to sexually abusing a 12-year-old girl in the 1980s. In 2025, he pleaded guilty to five counts of lewd or indecent acts with a child.

Following his death in 2020, a 2021 investigation revealed a secret life involving extensive sexual harassment and the misuse of humanitarian funds to support massage therapists. This led to the collapse of his global apologetics ministry in many regions.

Known for his celebrity connections, he was fired in 2020 for "moral failures," which he later admitted included marital infidelity and leadership misconduct.

A former head of the National Association of Evangelicals, he resigned in 2006 after a male prostitute revealed a three-year relationship involving drug use.

The influential founder resigned in 2018 following multiple allegations of sexual misconduct and abuse of power toward female staff and congregants.

One of the most famous historical falls, this man's ministry was toppled in 1988 after he was photographed with a sex worker. Despite a tearful public confession, he was caught in a similar scandal three years later.

I think some of the most damaging effects of episodes such as these is that in a day and time, when people are searching and looking for something real and authentic (love) in the churches across America, and the world, they are finding it led by *hypocrites*. When they are looking, whether they know it or not, for the LOVE of Christ, they are finding many prominent churches led by what?

Sex is NOT love: Isn't this just like the enemy?

Hypocrite

One who puts on a mask and feigns himself to be what he is not; a dissembler in religion. Our Lord severely rebuked the scribes and Pharisees for their hypocrisy (Matt. 6:2, 5, 16). "The hypocrite's hope shall perish" (Job 8:13). The Hebrew word here rendered "hypocrite" rather means the "godless" or "profane," as it is rendered in Jer. 23:11, i.e., polluted with crimes.

Sadly, this is nothing *new*:

**¹¹ For both prophet and priest are profane;
yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the LORD.
¹² Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness:
they shall be driven on, and fall therein:
for I will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, saith the LORD.
¹³ And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria;
they prophesied in Baal,
and caused my people Israel to err.
¹⁴ I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing:
they commit adultery, and walk in lies:
they strengthen also the hands of evildoers,
that none doth return from his wickedness:
they are all of them unto me as Sodom,
and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah.
¹⁵ Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets; Behold, I will feed them
with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem
is profaneness gone forth into all the land. ¹⁶ Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto
the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of
their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD. ¹⁷ They say still unto them that
despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that
walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you. ¹⁸ For who hath
stood in the counsel of the LORD, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked
his word, and heard it? ¹⁹ Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD is gone forth in fury, even a
grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked. ²⁰ The anger of the
LORD shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his**

heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly. ²¹ I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. ²² But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings. Jeremiah 23:11-22

Man has a short memory, and we need to be constantly reminded and on guard. We are told:

¹ Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. ² Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: ³ And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. 1 John 4:1-3

So, what is our test? What is the standard we compare today's teachers and Apostles to? The WORD of God. Today, we see "transformation" taking shape in the wrong way... shape-shifters, darkness masquerading as light, seeking to deceive... the unreal being held out as the real... In 2 Timothy, Paul warned of these things taking place in the end days:

¹ This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. ² For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³ Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, ⁴ Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; ⁵ Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. 2 Timothy 3:1-5

There is a saying, called "The Secret Service Analogy" or the "Counterfeit Money Analogy"; It states that the best way to recognize a counterfeit is *not* by studying the fakes, but by becoming so familiar with the real thing that *any* deviation stands out immediately.

What is our armor, our protection, our guard against hypocrisy and the deception of the enemy? Submission and obedience...

⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. ⁹ Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. James 4:7-10

String, strands, rope...

¹² And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken. Ecclesiastes 4:12

**²² His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself,
and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins. Proverbs 5:22**

There is a saying I like... *“What parents allow in moderation, children will excuse in excess.”*

One cord will not typically bind one thing to another for long. But, wrap the cord around two or three of five or twenty-five times, and the two are not going to be easily separated. This is what sins are like, and we need to guard against deception and the sins we see in others and in ourselves. If we allow one sin, it makes it easier to allow another, and then another, until we are bound with a rope.

***Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹²
For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against
the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. ¹³
Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the
evil day, and having done all, to stand. Ephesians 6:11-13***

Note that this passage says to **PUT ON**. We are not only to read, study and love the Word of the Lord... we are to put it on, to be clothed with it, to have it become part of our being, we are to become one with the Word.

Remember, this entire teaching has as its purpose, to make us aware of and put us on guard against false Apostles, false teaching, deceitful workers, authors, educators, etc. We are to be on guard against such. We should prefer *reverence* for Gods Word versus *sensationalism*.

**But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign;
and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: Matthew 12:39**

**¹⁰ The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom:
a good understanding have all they that do his commandments:
his praise endureth for ever. Psalms 111:10**

How do we remain vigilant and on guard? Four ways:

1. Habits

a. **Habit poems**

- b. **Repeated pattern of behavior.** ¹⁸ For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. ¹⁹ While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. ²⁰ For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. ²¹ For it had been better for

them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. ²² But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. 2 Peter 2:18-22 Create for yourself good habits, for if you don't, bad habits will form in your life.

- c. **Jesus'** immediate and automatic obedience in the midst of crisis was the result (of him being very God!) of His habits... solitude, prayer, meditation on Gods word, and obedience to the smallest details on a daily basis.

2. Discipline

- a. Discipline > Disciple > student of the Word > Learner. **But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. ⁸ For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. 1 Timothy 4:7-8**
- b. No quick fixes
- c. The mundane versus the miraculous (the ordinary versus the extraordinary)
- d. It's in the small things
 - i. Prayer
 - ii. The Word
 - iii. Confession
 - iv. Repentance
 - 1. Monica – share the story about packing boxes.

3. Obedience

- a. Self-evaluation. Is there one thing we can identify that we are not obedient in? Don't make a list, just put down one thing, and work on that and then move on to the next. Make this a discipline. **And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. ²³ For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. 1 Samuel 15:22-23**

4. Prioritize

- a. Start-stop. Ask the Lord to reveal one thing in each of these areas that you could start doing that would be pleasing to Him. Then ask Him to reveal to you one thing in each area that you *are* doing that you should stop doing that would be pleasing to Him.

b. Priority Pyramid:

