

Ministries of Light?

If Paul issued a more important warning for Christians than **II Corinthians 11:12-14**, I'm not sure what it is. "And what I am doing I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do. For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light" (ESV).

Our enemy is cunning, baffling, and powerful. Unlike the cartoons, he doesn't appear on our shoulders in a red suit with horns, pitchfork, and pointy tail. He rarely gets us to stray with the utterly evil. He starts his campaign against us by wrapping his temptations in the guise of righteousness, even using Scripture to deceive (see **Matthew 4:5-7**). He invites us to stray imperceptibly from God's path. Then incrementally he leads us further afield until we can't even tell what righteousness is.

How has Satan been able to get many who claim to be Christians to accept same-gender sexual behavior as lawful? He wrapped it in the righteousness of love. That is, we all know the Bible teaches we need to love. And now, many have become convinced it is unloving to tell someone their behavior is sinful. Disguised as an angel of love, Satan has convinced the majority of the world and a new generation to sell out to sinful behavior.

There is another attack Satan is making, distorting the gospel message. It has become so accepted that to even question it is treated like questioning the gospel itself. Here is how it has happened. We all know the Bible tells us to do good to all people (**Galatians 6:10**). Further, Christians who are changed by the gospel of Christ will be zealous for and devoted to good works, helping in cases of urgent need (**Titus 2:14; 3:14**). The enemy, once again disguising himself as an angel of love, is using principles like these to replace the message of the gospel with the message of good deeds. Social justice, everyone having the same standard of living, has become the "gospel" of our day. Many are becoming convinced the church's role is to spread social equality, not the gospel. There was a time when Christians understood we could feed someone, clothe someone, give someone a drink, help them get a job, find them a home, but if we didn't teach them the gospel of Christ, we didn't accomplish anything truly worthwhile. Today, most folks, even many Christians, believe the opposite, believing if we teach someone the gospel, but they are still hungry, we haven't accomplished anything worthwhile.

Yes, Christians must do good works, helping those in need. Further, those who refuse to do so are not following the gospel. But Jesus did not die in order to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, or even house the homeless. Passing on good works is not the same as spreading the gospel. Jesus did not die to end slavery, provide financial equality, or end governmental oppression. Societal improvement is not kingdom growth. Jesus did not die to save society. He died to save sinners from the coming wrath of God (**Romans 5:9**). While I think most who are spreading the message of social justice as Christ's gospel aren't purposefully trying to deceive, they have been deceived by Satan disguised as an angel of light. Let us not be deceived and, instead, take care to keep the spread of Jesus's soul-saving gospel this congregation's goal.