

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

841 Old Hickory Blvd.
Jackson, TN 38305
oldhickorycofc.com

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The Great Delusion

In the night of His betrayal, Jesus tells His disciples, "All ye shall be offended in me this night." (Matt. 26:31). But Peter thought otherwise and said so. "If all shall be offended in thee, I will never be offended" (v.33). Peter was saying, in effect, what so many others have said down through the years: "It won't happen to me:" — but it did.

"It won't happen to me" is a pernicious but popular form of self-deception that blinds us to truth, facts, and reality. This was brought home to me recently when a friend of a friend of mine was hospitalized as a result of a serious motorcycle accident. One of his visitors remarked that she would like for her son to come up and see first-hand what happens to people who ride those "awful machines". The answer coming from the hospital bed was not what she expected. "It won't do any good for your son to see me like this", he replied. "They all think it won't happen to them." Having two grown sons and another "going on grown," I can appreciate his reply. Citing accident reports, death and injury statistics, personal testimonies, and the like to teenagers with "motorcycle fever" is like talking to deaf people — because, like the man said, they think it won't happen to them. However, would-be motorcycle jockeys are not the only ones who suffer from such delusions.

Consider, for instance, the multitudes of grown, intelligent people (including some anti-motorcyclists) who choose to ignore the frequent and competent warnings linking smoking to cancer and heart disease. They know the risks, they know that tobacco will contribute to nearly 130,000 cancer deaths this year, yet somehow conclude, "It won't happen to me." Shortly before dying with lung cancer a dear friend once told me, "We always think it just happens to the other fellow, don't we? — too late we learn better." But the cherished delusion doesn't stop here.

Think of the mountain of evidence drinkers choose to ignore. Over 55% of all highway deaths are alcohol-related; over 6 1/2 million Americans have become alcoholics and 3 million teenagers are headed in the same direction. Alcohol contributes to broken homes, neglected children, lost jobs, and countless other problems yet the drinker, even

when sober, comes to the irrational and preposterous conclusion that "It won't happen to me."

Foolish? Consider the fact that one out of six unmarried women will become pregnant this year. Some of them will be Christians, taught from youth to "flee fornication" and to keep themselves pure. Think, too, of young Christians who choose to marry and spend the rest of their lives with a non-Christian. They have heard of the dangers, the weakening influences in such a relationship, yet they continue to think what they want to believe, "It won't happen to me."

Finally, consider the host of unfaithful who have become spiritual dropouts through the years. Most never thought they would; they didn't plan to. Perhaps, they too, lived with the Great Delusion of Peter. Do you?

- Dan S. Shipley, via *Plain Talk*, May, 1983

The Narrow Road

Life is full of choices. There are things that everyone must choose to do or not do, places to decide to go or not to go, and people to become friends with or to ignore. We have many choices to make, and many of them are difficult. The Lord spoke of a choice man has to make in Matthew 7:13-14. It says there, "Enter in by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few that find it."

Picture, if you will, that you are standing at an intersection of two roads. The first road is well-paved, easy to navigate, and mostly straight, with very few hills to climb and several lanes for driving. The other road is a two-lane road with potholes, no shoulders, curvy, and very hilly. Which road would you choose to travel? Most people will take the first road because of the ease of navigation. Why would anyone willingly go down the second road with all of its difficulties?

We face the same two choices in our spiritual lives. It is easy to do the things of this world and go down that "easy road." We will meet little or no resistance if we choose to go along with what everyone else is doing. The cruise control can be set, the seat leaned back, the air conditioner cranked up, the stereo on our favorite radio station, and no cares or anything getting in our way. There is no such thing as peer pressure on this road because everyone does whatever is pleasing at the time.

The other choice, however, is not as easy. It is a difficult road. It is indeed the road less traveled (Matthew 7:14). For the most part, people do not wish to be different from the rest of the world. It is difficult to be different from the world (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

Finally, notice also that these two roads have crossovers. There is tremendous pressure on those who take the difficult road or way to leave it and cross over to the easier route. One can go from the easy road to the difficult road through obedience to God's will (Matthew 7:21) and living a life faithful to Him (Revelation 2:10). However, most do not cross over to this way. In fact, many cross over from the difficult road to the easy road. Perhaps the road less traveled gets too difficult for them, or like Demas, they "love this present world" (2 Timothy 4:10). They see that it is much easier to "go with the flow of traffic" on the easier road and choose to take it. What we must do then is consider the end of the two roads. The narrow road leads to the right destination, which is eternal life (Matthew 7:14). The well-traveled road leads to a dead-end, a destination of destruction (Matthew 7:13). Which road are you choosing?

- Aric Russell

Three Areas of Deception!

The Bible is filled with warnings of the danger of being deceived by others (Ephesians 5:6; 1 John 3:7), but also by oneself (Galatians 6:3; 1 Corinthians 3:18). Many people fall prey to deception, whatever form it takes. The long list includes the following ways in which people are deceived:

1. *Some People Believe They Do Not Need to be Cleansed From Sin by the Blood of Christ.* But if a person believes he lives above sin he is being self-deceived. Writing to Christians, the apostle John stated, "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us." (1 John 1:8-10). It is amazing that some people actually claim lives that are sinless. Long ago Solomon wrote, "He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion." (Proverbs 28:13). With these people, truth has been replaced with falsehood. John's message is that even Christians continue to need the blood of Christ, which "cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). Note: "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," (Romans 3:23). Those who deny this are just being deceived.

2. *Some People Believe that They Can Sow One Thing and Reap Something Else.* Paul emphasized, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap." (Galatians 6:7). The subject being considered in this context is the Christian's responsibility to use his money properly. In this connection it is helpful to study Matthew 6:19-20 and 1 Timothy 6:17-19, where one can realize the impossibility of attempting to outwit the Lord by the improper use of his money. Reaping the harvest of happiness in heaven comes by laying up treasure there. Man cannot live the life of the wicked and die the death of the righteous; he cannot sow one kind of life and reap another kind. Believing this and attempting to live this way is being deceived.

3. *Some People Believe that They Can Put Off Living as a Christian Until Tomorrow.* There is a powerful reason why Paul clearly stated, "Behold, now is 'the acceptable time,' behold, now is 'the day of salvation'--" (2 Corinthians 6:2b). Today is the day of opportunity for everyone; tomorrow may never come! Solomon said, "Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth" (Proverbs 27:1). Quite a powerful deception among men is when they attempt to convince themselves, behaving accordingly, that they are in control of their own future. Man's future is uncertain (cf. James 4:13-15). Jesus Christ declared in the parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:16-21) that God directs the events of one's future. It is presumptuously arrogant for man to think he can plan his future with a great degree of confidence. Boasting of one's future plans in lofty self-assurance ignores God. This is flagrant self-deception.

The Christian especially should be knowledgeable concerning the schemes of the devil (Ephesians 6:11; cf. 2 Corinthians 2:11). Deception is a powerful tool that proceeds from his very nature (John 8:44). By it, the devouring devil (1 Peter 5:8) is attempting to deceive the whole world (Revelation 12:9). Friend, have you been deceived by him?

- Gary Smalley

* "Prejudice is a great time-saver; it enables a man to form opinions without bothering to get the facts!"

* "Every minute of life that is lost is gone forever. Use your time wisely!"

* "The man who gets too hot cooks his own goose!"

* "A Bible that's falling apart usually belongs to a person who isn't!"

* "Mamma said to give freely to the Lord, save a little, and learn to live on the rest. We had to abandon the saving part at times, but made it on the other!" – Robert F. Turner (1975)

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)