

Dear Friends,

Is it possible for an errant and prideful believer to deceive and so influence a sincere and sound believer as to lead them astray from truly Biblical "Sound doctrine"? Indeed it is, and many New Testament letters were written with this specific problem threaded throughout the content of the letter.

In our present study of true Biblical rewards, our study passage this week underscores that point. Like so many errors in spiritual matters, advocates of errant teaching will "intrude into those things which they have not seen," often things about which Scripture says nothing, and build an imaginary "House of cards" that looks impressive, that gives the false teacher much pride in the appearance of his accomplishment, but that falls under the slightest breeze of sound Biblical examination. Consider just a few more or less common ideas that fall under this caption of imaginary and prideful error.

1. God's "Secret will." Scripture never mentions such a thing. Often teachers of this error will go into details about how God's "Secret will" actually contradicts His "Revealed will" in Scripture. Scripture confronts this notion and soundly repudiates it. God not only does not lie; Titus 1:2 tells us ***He cannot lie***. Such an act would contradict His perfect righteousness--and thereby disqualify Him from being God!
2. Was Adam, or Eve as well, for that matter, a child of God? Any answer to this question relies on nothing more than our imagination. Scripture never mentions the idea. I fear that too much interest in this kind of question reveals the near obsessive passion of some doctrinal traditions in our time focusing too much of their effort on who is and who is not saved instead of focusing on being a faithful servant ourselves. Are we God's judge of His law? Or are we subjects of His law?

People who embrace a fatalistic leaning belief system despise any thought of any kind of "Reward" from God to His children in Scripture. As we are learning in this study, one would need more than imagination to exclude the many passages we've studied already on godly rewards which the Lord reserves for His faithful, believing children. At the end of the day, my faith rests on God and His Word in Scripture and not on any man's vain imagination.

The more I study true Bible rewards the more I am persuaded that they form an important part of sound and complete Bible doctrine. And the more I am also persuaded that I need to work much harder to experience more of those rewards.

Lord bless,
Joe Holder

A Reward Lost by Defrauding Legalism

Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. (Colossians 2:18-19 KJV 1900)

Let no man beguile you of your reward. Interesting, the second listed definition of "Beguile" in the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary is "To deprive of by fraud." As the verse and lesson continues, it becomes clear that pride and perhaps even a measure of dishonesty is involved in the process of influencing godly believers to forfeit their temporal blessing, their "reward." While I believe our temporal "Rewards" for faithful service come from the Lord, it is wholly possible that we may allow

deceitful, prideful believers to mislead us and to deceive us so as to rob us of that special blessing. We want to believe that every person who claims faith really has it and truly follows its influence in their lifestyle. However, Scripture and life experience proves that conclusion wrong. On a few occasions over our years, Sandra has warned me about a professing believer whom she sensed was not sincere or motivated by godly faith. I wanted to believe these people were genuine, but time proved her wise and correct.

How do these people deceive sincere believers? “Voluntary” refers to knowing and conscious intent. They know and intentionally practice a counterfeit show of humility. They are quite skilled at the deceit necessary to beguile sincere believers. I recall a rare occasion many years ago when I questioned a preacher about an incident he told me; did he so speak his thoughts as to correctly communicate them to a man, or did he intentionally misrepresent his thoughts so that the man thought he meant something wholly different? To his anemic credit, the man confessed that he intentionally misrepresented his ideas so as to deceive. Such patent dishonesty should immediately and permanently disqualify a man from ever again filling a pulpit.

They also compromise their object of worship. Scripture requires that we worship the Lord alone, but these people magnify angels so as to attract worship of angels. Scripture shouts to our conscience that our God alone is the only right object of our worship. In Revelation, John received much information and guidance from angels. When he became overwhelmed by the angel’s glory, he would bow, but the angel always—no exception—refused to accept his worship. How twisted is the thinking of a professing believer who actually worships angels.

They intrude “...*into those things which he hath not seen.*” Simply stated, they pretend to know far more than they actually know. Perhaps this description also implies that they pretend to know things which they cannot possibly know. How many extended conversations have you had with someone over a question not at all addressed, much less answered in Scripture? “Was Adam born again?” I can’t find a single verse in my Bible that addresses this question at all. Any answer we give to the question, pro or con, is mere speculation. Paul counsels us to avoid such questions. Do not “intrude” into them. (2 Timothy 2:14, 16) Such questions, at best, plant seeds of senseless controversy. Why, why on earth would anyone waste their mental energy on a question that is neither asked nor answered in Scripture? Do you honestly think that you can answer it yourself if Scripture never answers it?

“...*vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.*” Pride overflows in such a person’s mind. He thinks himself to know far more than he actually knows. Obviously, pride is a major problem for these people. In his teaching regarding the two offices in a New Testament church, Paul warns Timothy—and us—not to ordain a “Novice,” a man new and untried in the faith. Why? Can’t a young, inexperienced believer be profitable? Yes, indeed he can, but Paul’s warning alerts us to a glaring vulnerability in a novice.

Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. (1 Timothy 3:6)

On a few regrettable occasions, I have participated in the ordination of someone too new in the faith to be prepared for ordination. My regret? In every case, the man proved Paul’s words to be true. He fell prey to pride and became unprofitable.

Satan or deceitful false teachers may feed the novice prideful ideas and set him up for Satan’s favorite strategy. Blind the person young in the faith and feed him a steady diet of pride. Then Satan can take charge of his unprofitable life at will.

How much time have you spent in the last seven months, thinking you know more about the Bible than someone else, any other believer? That time was the worst waste of time you could have imagined. In those moments, you set your own world record for bad, unprofitable spiritual waste.

Unfortunately, this pride problem doesn't end with your own wasted time. It also sets you up to say or do things that directly wound some of the Lord's children.

But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offenses! for it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh! (Matthew 18:6-7)

If you had any doubt about Jesus' opinion of prideful words and actions before reading this lesson, you can't have them after reading it. Jesus actually says much more on the question.

Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. (Matthew 18:10)

If pride controls your mind so that you waste your private time thinking how much wiser or more righteous you are than another believer, take note of Jesus' words, "**Take heed!**" You are treading on dangerous ground. You may despise one of the Lord's little ones. How might you fare in conflict with an angel from heaven? Curtains!

And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. The prideful, deceived believer may think that he honors the Lord more than any of those "Inferior" believers with whom he gleefully compares himself. Paul, writing by the direction of the Holy Spirit, disagrees. No professing believer can despise or look down on another believer and also hold Jesus, our "Head," so as to grow increase to the glory of God. Impossible.

Spiritual nutrition and health are not supplied to a church or individual believers by a prideful believer. It flows directly from the Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus. He designed and supplies His "Network" of vehicles by which He supplies our every need, both as individuals and as members of His Church.

If we follow Paul's inspired words in this lesson, we understand that our task, assigned from the Lord Himself, is not to feed our pride, but to nourish and minister to each fellow-believer so as to grow them healthier and stronger in their faith.

When Paul exhorted husbands to love their wives, "...even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it," (Ephesians 5:25b) he gave us a precise directive. How did Christ love His church? He loved her sacrificially, self-sacrificially! So much so that He gave Himself for her well-being. Men, how much do you love your wife? Enough to give your life for her well-being? Wives, how about you? The principle cuts both ways. If we extend this basic principle of self-sacrificing love, how much do we love our church family? When "Push comes to shove" when the church is discussing decisions that are needed regarding the church, do you manifest that self-sacrificing spirit of Jesus, or do you immediately work to push the people to agree with your preferred ideas? The reality of Biblical faith and with holding our Head appropriately up for His deserved glory "...with the increase of God," stands or falls by how we treat our dear church family. Do we regard them highly as members of that holy people? Or do we think of how we can influence them to agree with our preferred wishes or ideas?

Based on Paul's precise language in the verses immediately following our study passage, many commentaries teach that the Colossian Church was invaded and threatened by an early gnostic heresy. Given the prideful idea of the gnostic master teachers having secret knowledge that common believers could not know, along with their emphatic rejection of anything material, this is quite likely

Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with

the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh. (Colossians 2:20-23)

Notice the external avoidance of anything material, “Touch not; taste not; handle not.” This attitude toward God’s natural creation, coupled with carnal pride, points a clear finger toward the likely growing influence of gnostic heresy in this church. Be the problem the basic issue of carnal pride or pride based on gnostic heresy, Paul strips away both and sends us directly to Jesus, our “Head.”

Quite possibly related to this early gnostic error, the Colossian Church had started to embrace various errors in attitude and lifestyle that Paul confronted with far more “Ink” in this letter than this brief exposure and rejection of the common basis in gnostic teaching. Error in a basic doctrine commonly leads to error in many other facets of the faith. As with the Colossian letter, a person embracing an errant belief tends to lead that person to think he/she has gained a higher knowledge or insight into God than others, leading to sinful pride. Paul confronts sinful pride much more forcefully than he confronts gnostic leanings, though he repudiates both. The claim of gnostic “Knowledge” priests to have secret knowledge sets the perfect stage for sinful pride, and Paul confronts both, leaving us clearly informed of their grievous error. Avoid them!

Elder Joe Holder