

NOTE: This file contains Parts 1-4 of the message: "A DECEITFUL SPIRIT".

OPENING SCRIPTURE(S): James 1:21-22, 1 Peter 2:1-3, 2 Timothy 3:13

1So get rid of all malicious [evil] behavior and deceit. Don't just pretend to be good! Be done with hypocrisy and jealousy and backstabbing.

2You must crave pure spiritual milk so that you can grow into the fullness of your salvation. Cry out for this nourishment as a baby cries for milk,

3now that you have had a taste of the Lord's kindness." 1 Peter 2:1-3

2 Timothy 3:13 is from Paul's letter to Timothy (and us by extension) of some of the "spiritual challenges" of living in the last days.

"But evil people and impostors will flourish. They will go on deceiving others, and they themselves will be deceived."

[Psalm 92:7: "Although the wicked flourish like weeds, and evildoers blossom with success, there is only eternal destruction ahead of them."]

With this verse, the Lord makes clear two things: (1) **"EVIL PEOPLE"** will flourish, and (2) **"IMPOSTERS"** will also flourish.

"Evil people" characterize **"all of the unsaved"** in general.

"Imposters", on the other hand, describe **"a particular type of 'unsaved people'"**—who pose a **"unique and present danger"** to God's people—*especially those who are "unable" to discern them!*

By definition, an **"imposter"** is **"a person who deceives others by pretending to be someone they are not."** Source: American Heritage Student Dictionary

Jesus talked about imposters and their deceptive power in **Matthew 7:15-20** as **"wolves in sheep's clothing"** and a much more dangerous imposter as the **False Prophet** in Revelation chapter 13 as **"having two horns like those of a lamb, and he spoke with the voice of a dragon...and with all the miracles he was allowed to perform on behalf of the first beast, he deceived all the people who belong to this world."** THAT'S A LOT OF POWER!

WHEN THE LORD SAVED ME AND THEN CALLED ME TO SHEPHERD HIS PEOPLE, I PROMISED TO PREACH AND TEACH EVERYTHING HE COMMANDED OR UNCTIONED ME TO PREACH OR TEACH.

AND SO, I STAND BEFORE YOU TODAY NOT JUST AS "YOUR BROTHER IN CHRIST"—BUT AS YOUR UNDERSHEPHERD—WITHOUT FEAR OF ANYONE OR ANYTHING EXCEPT THE ONE WHO SAVED ME AND CALLED ME!

For some time, my spirit within me has been troubled by a **"unrelenting heaviness"** that's **hindering us from "joyful praise and free and liberating worship and service" to the God we claim is MASTER, LORD, AND REDEEMER.**

So, I prayed to the Lord and He revealed to me what it was that disturbed and troubled me.

But even AFTER that, I waited...until He released me to speak on it.

THIS IS THAT 2nd MESSAGE THE LORD TOLD US MORE THAN 5 MESSAGES AGO WAS COMING. EVEN SO...

THIS MESSAGE IS GOING TO BE HARD FOR SOME OF YOU TO HEAR AND HARDER FOR OTHERS TO RECEIVE...THAT'S WHY I PRACTICALLY BEGGED US TO FAST AND PRAY AHEAD OF IT SO THE DEVIL WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO SUCCESSFULLY WORK AGAINST IT OR SNATCH GOD'S MESSAGE FROM OUR HEARTS.

THIS MESSAGE IS DESIGNED TO ACCOMPLISH 3 THINGS:

- 1) **"EXPOSE"** ANY KINKS IN OUR "COLLECTIVE" ARMOR,
- 2) **"CLOSE"** ANY "DOORS" WE MAY'VE INADVERTENTLY OPENED BY "LAPSES" IN OUR LOVE, OUR HUMILITY, OR PROPER FEAR OF THE LORD,
- 3) **"REPAIR"** WHAT CAN BE AN OTHERWISE "DISQUALIFYING" CHARACTER FLAW.

A "DECEITFUL SPIRIT" IS AT WORK AMONG US!

The first step in EXPELLING "spirits" is to **"EXPOSE THE SPIRIT"**—and the 2nd Step is to **"EXPOSE THE PERSON(S)".**

This message is the "FIRST STEP" to expelling that spirit from WITHIN and AMONG us!

I AM CONFIDENT BEFORE GOD THAT HE HAS SHOWN SOME OF YOU THE SAME THING!

A DECEITFUL SPIRIT, part 1

1So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the message God has planted in your hearts, for it is strong enough to save your souls. **2**And remember, it is a message to obey, not just to listen to. If you don't obey, you are only fooling yourself." James 1:21-22

1Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, rebuke and expose them. **2**It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret. **3**But when the light shines on them, it becomes clear how evil these things are. **4**And where your light shines, it will expose their evil deeds. This is why it is said, "Awake, O sleeper, rise up from the dead, and Christ will give you light." Ephesians 5:11-14

THE WORD OF GOD IS A POTENT DISINFECTANT FOR SIN AND A STRONG, ILLUMINATING LIGHT FOR WHATEVER WANTS TO HIDE IN THE DARKNESS!

BEFORE GOING ANY FURTHER, I WANT TO REMIND US OF 5 “TIMELESS COMMANDS” FROM PAUL’S FIRST LETTER TO THE BELIEVERS AT THESSALONICA:
“19Do not stifle [quench] the Holy Spirit. 20Do not scoff at prophecies, 21but test everything that is said. Hold on to what is good. 22Stay away from every kind of evil.” 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22 THIS IS OUR “PLUMBLINE AND MARCHING ORDERS” GOING FORWARD!

All that said, the first “pushback” to this message is going to sound like this in your heart: **“Pastor, I just don’t see that among us.”**
 That’s fine—because your “pushback” affirms our first point and that is...

1. A “deceitful spirit” is a “SPIRIT”—and “spirits” have to be “spiritually discerned”!

“14But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.” 1 Corinthians 2:14-15 KJV

To be plain: Unless a person is born of the Spirit and even then ONLY UNTIL and UNLESS the Lord opens our “spiritual eyes and the eyes of our understanding”—we won’t be able to “SEE or RECOGNIZE” spirits and forces that influence and oppose us!

THE MOST DANGEROUS SPIRITS ARE NOT THOSE THAT OPPOSE AND HINDER US—BUT THOSE THAT “WORK ALONG SIDE US UNDETECTED AND UNOPPOSED”!

Go to Psalm 36:1-4

“1Sin whispers to the wicked, deep within their hearts. They have no fear of God to restrain. 2In their blind conceit, they cannot see how wicked they really are. 3Everything they say is crooked and deceitful. They refuse to act wisely or do good. 4They lie awake at night, hatching sinful plots. Their course of action is never good. They make no attempt to turn from evil.”

WHAT IS OUR DEFENSE AGAINST SUCH WICKED SPIRITS?—THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE WORD OF GOD, AND TO SOME THE “ABILITY TO DISCERN SPIRITS”—AS A SPIRITUAL GIFT!

“7A spiritual gift is given to each of us so as a means of helping the entire church. 8To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another He gives the gift of special knowledge. 9The same Spirit gives special faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the power to heal the sick. 10He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to know [discern] whether it’s really the Spirit of God or another spirit that is speaking. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, and another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. 11It is the one and only Spirit who distributes these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.” 1 Corinthians 12:7-11

The second thing we need to KNOW and UNDERSTAND is...

2. The difference between “DECEIT” and a “DECEITFUL SPIRIT”.

NOTE: WE’RE SAYING EVERYONE WHO IS OR HAS ACTED “DECEITFULLY” HAS A “DECEITFUL SPIRIT”!

LET’S DEFER TO ONE OF JESUS’ TEACHINGS IN MARK CHAPTER 7 TO MAKE THIS POINT:

“14Then Jesus called to the crowd to come and hear. “All of you listen,” He said, “and try to understand.

15You are not defiled by what you eat; you are defiled by WHAT YOU SAY AND DO!”

17Then Jesus went into a house to get away from the crowds, and His disciples asked Him what He meant by the statement He had made.

18“Don’t you understand either?” He asked. “Can’t you see that what you eat won’t defile you? 19Food doesn’t go into your heart, but only passes through the stomach and then and then comes out again.” (By saying this, He showed that every kind of food is acceptable.)

20And then He added, “It is the thought-life that defiles you. 21For from within, out of a person’s heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, 22adultery, greed, wickedness, DECEIT, eagerness for lustful pleasure, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness.

23All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you and make you unacceptable to God.”

All those ‘VILE’ things Jesus just mentioned are part of our “fallen nature”.

It’s in our “fallen DNA” to do **ANY** or **ALL** of those “vile things”—including **“being deceitful”**—when it benefits us or when it serves our purposes!

3. A “deceitful spirit” is an “EVIL SPIRIT” that works deceitfully!

Has anyone ever accused you of being a “CHAMELEON”—If so, they were saying, you are a “deceitful person”!

Deceitful spirits work IN and THROUGH deceitful people—causing them to THINK and BEHAVE in “deceitful” and “spiteful ways”!—**with pretense, lies, and “thinly-veiled” contempt!** GO TO PSALM 55 FOR A QUICK ILLUSTRATION:

“12It is not an enemy who taunts me—I could bear that. It is not my foes who so arrogantly insult me—I could have hidden from them. 13Instead, it is you—my equal, my companion and close friend. 14What good fellowship we once enjoyed as we walked together to the house of God...

20As for this friend of mine, he betrayed me; he broke his promises. 21His words are as smooth as cream [butter], but in his heart is war. His words are as soothing as lotion, but underneath are daggers! 22Give your burdens to the LORD, and he will take care of you. He will not permit the godly to slip and fall.”

Few believers realize the “spiritual danger” they’re in when they allow themselves to be **“ENTICED and then USED or CONTROLLED”** by a deceitful spirit—especially if **“BEING DECEITFUL”** HAS WORKED FOR THEM ALL THEIR LIVES!

Would you agree that anyone who could “betray or crucify” the Son of God was controlled by an “evil spirit”?

Go to John 13:21-30

21Now Jesus was in great anguish [deeply troubled], and he exclaimed, **“The truth is, one of you will betray me!”**

22The disciples looked at each other, wondering whom He could mean. **23**One of Jesus’ disciples, the one Jesus loved, was sitting next to Jesus at the table. **24**Simon Peter motioned to him to ask who would do this terrible thing.

25Leaning toward Jesus, he asked, **“Lord, who is it?”** **26**Jesus responded, **“It is the one to whom I give the bread dipped in the sauce.”**

And when He had dipped it, He gave it to Judas, son of Simon Iscariot. 27As soon as Judas had eaten the bread, Satan entered into him. **Then Jesus told him, “Hurry. Do it now.”**

28None of the others at the table knew what Jesus meant. **29**Since Judas was their treasurer, some thought Jesus was telling him to go and pay for the food or to give some money to the poor. **30**So Judas left at once, going out into the night.”

Go to Matthew 26:20-25

“20When it was evening, Jesus sat down at the table with the twelve disciples. **21**While they were eating, He said, **“The truth is, one of you will betray me.”** **22**Greatly distressed, **one by one they began to ask Him, “I am not the one, am I Lord?”**

23He replied, **“One of you who is eating with Me now will betray me.”**

24For I, the Son of Man must die, as the Scriptures declared long ago. But how terrible it will be for my betrayer. Far better for him if he had never been born!”

25Judas, the one who would betray him, **also asked, “Teacher, I am not the one, am I?”** And Jesus told him, **“You have said it yourself.”** Note what Jesus just told Judas was: ***Not only are you the one—but you just confessed to being the one!***

EVEN THOUGH JESUS GAVE MORE THAN ONE CLUE TO THOSE WHO ASKED IF **“THEY WOULD BE THE DISCIPLE WHO BETRAY HIM”**—**ONLY ONE OF THE DISCIPLES PRESENT KNEW WHO JESUS WAS TALKING ABOUT—JUDAS!**

SO, HERE’S THE QUESTION:

JUDAS KNEW HE WAS THE ONE JESUS WAS TALKING ABOUT...SO, WHY DID HE STILL ASK IN VERSE 25,

“I am not the one, am I Lord?”

Notice something else that can be misleading: When Judas asked this question—he was **“POLITE or RESPECTFUL**—in addressing Jesus as **“Teacher or Rabbi”**—but he was still being **DECEITFUL**—because he had already agreed to betray Jesus!

Look at Matthew 26:14-16.

“14Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples, went to the leading priests **15**and asked,

“How much will you pay me to betray Jesus to you?” And they gave him thirty pieces of silver.

16From that time on, Judas began looking for [the right time and place] to betray Jesus.”

That’s the end of Part 1 of A DECEITFUL SPIRIT. Stay tuned because there is much more to come!

AND MAY THE GOD OF PEACE “GUARD YOUR HEARTS” AND “PROTECT YOU WITH HIS PEACE”! AMEN!

MY CLOSING THOUGHT AND INVITATION TO ETERNAL LIFE

We’ve been talking about a “deceitful spirit”.

It is a “deceitful spirit” that makes people think they have “more time to get saved or get right with God!

A DECEITFUL SPIRIT, part 2

A QUICK RECAP OF PART 1

1. A “deceitful spirit” is a “SPIRIT”—and unless the Lord “exposes and names” the spirit—they MUST be “spiritually discerned by their WORKS or MANIFESTATIONS! That’s why He has given some believers the “ability to discern spirits” [1 Cor. 12:10]
2. We talked about the difference between “deceit” and a “Deceitful spirit”. “Deceit” is in our fallen DNA and among 11 vile things [Mark 7:14-23] that can make us “unacceptable” to God. Of course, anything that makes us “unacceptable” to God is high on the list of things that he will try to “activate” for his evil purposes!
3. We said a “deceitful spirit” is an “EVIL SPIRIT”. Evil spirits don’t just flourish and function in the world—they also work deceitfully and destructively in many Churches where “discernment” and “strong teaching” is lacking! Or, where BOTH are present—but there may be “pockets” of disobedience and rebellion!

WE HAVE 2 POINTS IN PART 2 OF THIS MESSAGE:

1. Aside from having to be “spiritually discerned”—another reason deceitful spirits “are difficult to detect is” people with “deceitful spirits” can “SAY” and “DO” what appears to be the “RIGHT THINGS”—or JUST ENOUGH OF THE “RIGHT THINGS” to fool those who lack discernment and understanding!

“Smooth words” have always been one tactic the Devil uses to “seduce and deceive” God’s people!

Proverbs 26:23-26

23Smooth words may hide a wicked heart, just as a pretty glaze covers a clay pot. **24**People may cover their hatred with pleasant words, but they’re deceiving you. **25**They pretend to be kind, but don’t believe them. Their hearts are full of many evils. **26**While their hatred may be concealed by trickery, their wrongdoing will be exposed in public.”

Psalms 55:12-14, 55:19-21

12It is not an enemy who taunts me—I could bear that. It is not my foes who so arrogantly insult me—I could have hidden from them. **13**Instead, it is you—my equal, my companion and close friend. **14**What good fellowship we once enjoyed as we walked together to the house of God. **19**For my enemies refuse to change their ways; they do not fear God. **20**As for my companion, he betrayed his friends; he broke his promises. **21**His words are as smooth as butter, but in his heart is war. His words are as soothing as lotion, but underneath are daggers!”

The believers encountered a “deceitful” spirit at Philippi. The apostle Paul and some other apostles were among them.

Paul was born-again, Spirit-filled, and spirit-led—and because of his calling, likely “discerned the presence of another spirit” right away—yet for days he may not have known “exactly what spirit” was at work in their midst.

Go now to Acts chapter 16:16-18. The author of the Book of Acts is traditionally ascribed to Luke, so this would be his account of events...

16One day as we were going down to the place of prayer, we met a slave girl. She was a fortune-teller who earned a lot of money for her [masters]

17She followed along behind us shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God, and they have come to tell you how to be saved.”

WHAT SHE SAID WAS “BIBLICALLY TRUE” CONCERNING THE APOSTLES—EXCEPT SHE SAID IT BY “THE WORKING OF ANOTHER SPIRIT”!

THE DANGER FOR THOSE PRESENT IS, SHE COULD’VE EASILY JOINED IN WITH THOSE WHO REGULARLY GATHERED AT THE “THE PLACE OF PRAYER”!

18This went on day after day until Paul got so exasperated that he turned and said to the demon within her,

“I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.”, he said. And instantly it left her.”

Let’s look at another example of deceit “hiding in plain sight” in Mark 12:13-17.

13The leaders sent some Pharisees and supporters of Herod to trap Jesus into saying something for which He could be arrested.

SO, WE KNOW RIGHT OFF THE BAT, THEY WERE “INTENTIONALLY BEING DECEITFUL”!

BUT LISTEN AS THEY CONTINUE IN THEIR DECEIT IN “PLAIN SIGHT” OF EVERYBODY...

14“Teacher,” these men said, “we know how honest you are. You are impartial and don’t play favorites. You sincerely teach the way of God.

EVERY BIT OF THAT IS TRUE CONCERNING JESUS!

NOW, HAVING “SET THE TRAP FOR JESUS”...they get down to what they’re after:

“Now tell us—is it right to pay taxes to the Roman government or not? **15**Should we pay them, or should we not?”

Jesus saw through their hypocrisy and said, “Whom are you trying to fool with your trick questions?

Show me a Roman coin, and I’ll tell you.”

16When they handed it to him, He asked, “Whose picture and title are stamped on it?” “Caesar’s,” they replied.

17“Well, then,” Jesus said, “give to Caesar what belongs to him. But everything that belongs to God must be given to God.”

His reply completely amazed them.”

WE WERE ALL CHILDREN—RIGHT? AND AS CHILDREN, WE CARRIED ON RIGHT IN FRONT OF PEOPLE.

- A child who learned to OBEY or DO JUST ENOUGH to avoid punishment or who learned to throw a temper tantrum—even with great sobbing tears in order to get to go to the movies with friends—may have learned how to use “deceit” to get what they want without ever knowing they may have opened a door to the “influence of a deceitful spirit”!

AND UNLESS WE'VE ALLOWED THE *HOLY SPIRIT AND THE WORD OF GOD* TO “TRANSFORM” AND CHANGE WHAT WORKED FOR US MOST OF OUR LIVES—WE TEND TO OPERATE THE SAME WAY AS ADULTS—JUST ON “ANOTHER LEVEL” OF SOPHISTICATION! To put it another way...

- When we, as adults, **DO JUST ENOUGH** to avoid being “exposed or rebuked” or who willfully **FEIGNS** just enough love, just enough respect, or just enough respect and support to fool or mislead those we serve—we’re also either “being deceitful” or we’re being influenced by a “deceitful spirit”!

There’s something else we need to know about “deceitful spirits...

2. A “deceitful” spirit is a “BEGUILING SPIRIT”.

The Bible says Eve was “beguiled or seduced” and then deceived by the serpent.

“But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent **DECEIVED** Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” 2 Cor. 11:3 NKJV

“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent **BEGUILED** Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” 2 Cor. 11:3 KJV

HOW WAS EVE “BEGUILED” AND THEN “DECEIVED”? GO TO GENESIS CHAPTER 3:1-13.

“Beguiling spirits” are like “chameleons”. I ASKED LAST SUNDAY—WHAT COLOR IS A CHAMELEON?

Like a chameleon—beguiling spirits have the power to “adapt” to **PEOPLE** and **SETTINGS**—in order to “ENTICE and GAIN THE CONFIDENCE AND TRUST OF OTHERS, or to “FOOL PEOPLE” into believing something that closely aligns with the truth, or believe something about themselves that is **NOT spiritually or morally genuine!**

Deceitful spirits entice people to SAY and DO “spiteful things” that hurt and offend!

But, when we treat deceitful people with respect and kindness and continue to do good to them—the Lord is pleased—and we can trust Him to show them who is being deceitful!

Twice David spared Saul’s life—and Saul even told David that he was “a better man” than he was—but he still tried to kill him or have him killed!

Go to 1 Samuel chapter 24.

That’s the end of Part 2 of A DECEITFUL SPIRIT. Stay tuned because there is much more to come!

MY CLOSING THOUGHT AND INVITATION TO ETERNAL LIFE

We’ve been talking about a “deceitful spirit”.

Ecclesiastes 7:2-4 says this:

“2It is better to spend your time at funerals than at festivals [parties]. For you are going to die, and you should think about it while there is still time. 3Sorrow is better than laughter, for sadness has a refining influence on us.

4A wise person thinks much about death, while the fool thinks only about having a good time now.”

Upon hearing what God just spoke through Solomon—it is a “*deceitful spirit*” that makes people think they have **“more time to get saved or repent and get right”** with the Lord!

A DECEITFUL SPIRIT, part 3

A QUICK RECAP OF PART 2

1. Aside from having to be “spiritually discerned”—another reason deceitful spirits “are difficult to detect is” people with “deceitful spirits” SAY and DO what appears to be all the “RIGHT THINGS”—or JUST ENOUGH OF THE “RIGHT THINGS” to fool those who lack spiritual discernment and understanding!
2. A “deceitful” spirit is a “BEGUILING SPIRIT”. The “original sin” was the result of the serpent “beguiling” Eve first to disobey a “direct commandment” from God—and then she seduced and deceived her husband [Adam] to sin in the same way against the LORD!

We have one main point and four subpoints as illustrations...

1. The Lord “faithfully watches over and cares for” the flock He purchased with the blood of His dear Son.

So, what do you think He does when He sees a “deceitful spirit or a pattern of deceitful behavior” in His church?

LET ME TELL YOU WHAT HE DOESN'T DO:

- (1) He NEVER “second-guesses” as to WHAT SPIRIT it is—or WHO the “guilty party” is.
- (2) He is NEVER timid about sounding the alarm!
- (3) And third—He is NEVER UNLOVING when He “EXPOSES” SPIRITS or DECEITFUL PEOPLE who refuse to repent—when they pose a “clear and present danger” to His flock.

*On the other hand, it **WOULD BE EXTREMELY UNLOVING and DISLOYAL TO THE FLOCK NOT TO!***

In an attempt to “hinder God’s work”, deceitful spirits entice “ROGUE BELIEVERS” who are either “unsettled” in their relationship with Christ or “dissatisfied” with the spiritual gift He gave them to THINK and ACT in “deceitful ways” that ultimately undermine “unity, trust, and goodwill” in the Body of Christ.

LET’S LOOK AT FOUR EXAMPLES TO ILLUSTRATE HOW IT’S DONE AND WHAT IT LOOKS AND SOUNDS LIKE:

1. The LORD SAW and HEARD “deceit” at work in the hearts of Moses’ brother and sister [Aaron and Miriam]—and He dealt with it according to the severity it deserved. Numbers 12:1-16

2They said, “Has the LORD spoken only through Moses? Hasn’t he spoken through us, too?”

A POINT OF REFERENCE: Miriam and Aaron were enticed by the “same deceitful spirit” that later inspired Korah and 250 prominent leaders of the congregation of Israel to “incite” an all-out rebellion against Moses in Numbers chapter 16!

This was their slanderous accusation against “the meekest man in the earth” in Numbers 16:3:

3They united against Moses and Aaron and said, “You have gone too far! The whole community of Israel has been set apart by the LORD, and he is with all of us. What right do you have to act as though you are greater than the rest of the LORD’s people?” Numbers 16:3

SOUNDS LIKE A STRATEGY FROM “A FAMILIAR PLAYBOOK” DOESN’T IT?

Another way deceitful spirits work in churches today is to cause members of a congregation to “*imagine or re-imagine*” that because they have many “excellent preachers or teachers” they must have more than one “shepherd”!

BEING ABLE TO TEACH OR PREACH DOES NOT A SHEPHERD MAKE!

THE WORK OF A SHEPHERD IS A “SOLEMN RESPONSIBILITY AND CALLING”—never to be entered into lightly or discharged recklessly!

1This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop [pastor, elder, overseer], he desires a good work. **2**A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach,” 1 Timothy 3:1-2 NKJV

1 Corinthians 4:15: “For even if you had ten thousand others to teach you about Christ, you have only one spiritual father...”

4:15 continues: “...For I became your father in Christ Jesus when I preached the Good News to you.”

Same verse in the CEV: “Ten thousand people may teach you about Christ, but I am your only father. You became my children when I told you about Christ Jesus.”

TO BE CLEAR:

Paul is not asserting “ownership, lordship, or claiming some ungodly “charismatic covering” over God’s people.

On the contrary, he is drawing distinction between those who teach or have some other role in the “equipping of God’s people” versus those called by God to “have the OVERSIGHT and ACCOUNTABILITY for their souls”!

Hebrews 13:17 admonishes us this way: “Obey your spiritual leaders and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they know they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this joyfully and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit.”

And while it is true and Ephesians 4:11-12 affirms:

11Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers.

12Their [collective] responsibility is to equip God’s people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ.”

Yes, there are “many leaders” in a congregation who are “called and gifted” to work together to “equip the Body to do the work of ministry—and each one of them is necessary!

BUT there MUST BY NECESSITY be only “one shepherd at a time” who is “accountable” for the sheep entrusted to them!

Jesus spoke on how “shepherds are called” in **John 10:1-5**:

“1”I assure you, anyone who sneaks over the wall of a sheepfold, rather than going through the gate, must surely be a thief and a robber! **2**For a shepherd enters through the gate. **3**The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. **4**After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they recognize his voice.

5They won’t follow a stranger; they will run from him because they don’t know his voice.”

2. The LORD saw **“the root of discontent that often leads to deceit”** in the personal assistant to the prophet Jeremiah and He revealed it to him! Jeremiah 36:1-4 is a “sampling” of the “privileged work” Baruch had been entrusted with. **Now go to chapter 45.**
3. The LORD saw **deceit in the heart** of another prophet’s assistant named Gehazi—and revealed it to that prophet. **2 Kings 5:15-16 and 5:20-27**

Fourth and lastly...

4. The LORD saw **deceit working against His Word in the early church and revealed it to the apostle Paul—who did what any responsible servant of the Lord should do—HE WARNED THE BELIEVERS—and called the perpetrator out by name!**

“14Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm, but the Lord will judge him for what he has done. **15**Be careful of him, for he fought against everything we said.” **2 Timothy 4:14-15**

THERE WAS LIKELY MORE THAN ONE ALEXANDER. SO TO AVOID CONFUSION—PAUL IDENTIFIED THE ONE EVERYBODY KNEW AS **“THE COPPERSMITH”**. ALEXANDER WASN’T “EXPOSED” BECAUSE OF SOME PERSONAL VENDETTA BETWEEN HIM AND PAUL—BUT FOR THE DANGER HE POSED TO GOD’S PEOPLE!

Alexander was likely “present among the believers” as the apostles taught about Christ and how to live the Christian life. And even though he was “present” among the believers—“He fought against [openly opposed or secretly worked against] everything” Paul and the other apostles taught!

The apostle John had to do a similar thing.

He wrote a letter to the church to expose another “deceitful worker” in his 3rd letter to the church we know as 3 John.

[3 John 9-12]: “9I sent a brief letter to the church about this, but Diotrephes, who loves to be the leader [or who wants to be the leader or go beyond the gift and authority he’s been given], **does not acknowledge our authority.**

NOTE: All I’m going to say about Diotrephes is—he leery of anyone who refuses to **“ACKNOWLEDGE ANY AUTHORITY”** except the authority they have or who sees nothing wrong with “assuming authority they’ve not been given”—or who eagerly embraces **“SECULAR AUTHORITY”** but is reticent and squeamish when it comes acknowledging and submitting to **“SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY”!**

I DON’T CARE WHO IT IS—BE CAREFUL OF PEOPLE LIKE THAT! YOU’RE DEALING WITH A “ROGUE AND DECEITFUL SPIRIT”!

IN CLOSING, WE ALL NEED TO EXAMINE OURSELVES AND FROM A REALLY DEEP PLACE ASK:

“LORD, AM I A “BARUCH” ...A “GEHAZI” ...A “DIOTREPES” ...A “MIRIAM...OR AN “ALEXANDER”?

“Am I a “deceitful worker” or a “devoted follower and servant” of You and your people?

That’s the end of Part 3 of “A DECEITFUL SPIRIT”. Stay tuned the 4th and final message...

IN THE MEANTIME, MAY THE GOD OF PEACE “GUARD YOUR HEARTS” AND “PROTECT YOU WITH HIS PEACE”! AMEN!

MY CLOSING THOUGHT AND INVITATION TO ETERNAL LIFE

As a reminder, it is a “deceitful spirit” that makes people think they have “more time to get saved” or repent and get right with God!

BELIEVERS’ COMMUNION 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-32

A DECEITFUL SPIRIT, part 4

A QUICK RECAP OF PART 3

1. When the Lord sees a “deceitful spirit or a pattern of deceitful behavior” at work in His church—He NEVER has to “second-guess” WHAT SPIRIT IT IS—and neither is He ever timid about sounding the alarm—even if it means naming “the perpetrator”!
2. It is NOT UNLOVING to “EXPOSE” divisive spirits and deceitful people—when they pose a clear and present danger to God’s flock. In fact, it is EXTREMELY UNLOVING and DISLOYAL TO THE LORD and THE FLOCK NOT TO!

1. Why “deceitful behavior” or to be “manipulated by a deceitful spirit” is a potentially “disqualifying” character flaw.

There are 3 things [or subpoints] you need to know so you’re not misled by those who “despise authority” away from Christ—through unbelief.

1. Those who have been called to the ministry as a “pastor, shepherd, overseer or elder” are entrusted with the “care and oversight” of God’s flock—that’s why they are often the “primary targets” of the Devil’s deceitful attacks! [Mark 14:27]

LET ME STATE FOR THE RECORD: Pastors “DON’T KNOW EVERYTHING” and they’re “NEVER EVERYWHERE PRESENT AT ONCE”!

But because they’re required to “account for and know the spiritual state” of the flock they’ve been entrusted to watch over—the Lord reveals things to them concerning the flock that He doesn’t reveal to the rest of the flock!

THAT’S BECAUSE AN ATTACK [ON HIS WORD or HIS FLOCK] WILL ALMOST ALWAYS BE AIMED AT THE SHEPHERD OF THAT FLOCK!

The prophet Jeremiah was completely unaware that a spiritual attack against him was an attack against God’s Word!

JEREMIAH 11:18-19 THE MESSAGE

18 God told me what was going on. That’s how I knew. You, God, opened my eyes to their evil scheming.

19 I had no idea what was going on—naïve as a lamb being led to slaughter! I didn’t know they had it in for me, didn’t know of their behind-the-scenes plots: “Let’s get rid of the preacher. That will stop the sermons! Let’s get rid of him for good. He won’t be remembered for long.”

Undeterred, the enemy leveled another conspiracy and attack on the Word of the LORD—and once again—through the LORD’s messenger.

JEREMIAH 18:18 NLT

“Then the people said, “Come on, let’s find a way to stop Jeremiah. We have our own priests and wise men and prophets.

We don’t need him to teach the law [the Word] and give us advice and prophecies. Let’s spread rumors about him and ignore what he says.”

The LORD let another servant of His know how the people were scheming and behaving deceitfully behind his back.

EZEKIEL 33:30-33

30“Son of man, your people are whispering behind your back. They talk about you in their houses and whisper about you [at the doors], saying, ‘Come on, let’s have some fun! Let’s go hear the prophet tell us what the LORD is saying!’ **31**So they come pretending to be sincere and sit before you listening. But they have no intention of doing what I tell them. They express love with their mouths, but their hearts seek only after money. **32**You are very entertaining to them, like someone who sings love songs with a beautiful voice or plays fine music on an instrument. They hear what you say, but they don’t do it!

33But when all these terrible things happen to them—as they certainly will—then they will know a prophet has been among them.”

2. Every “duly called shepherd” is—by their calling—a “WATCHMAN” over the sheep entrusted to them in much the same way the prophets of old were!

Go now to Ezekiel chapter 3:17-19.

17“Son of man, I have appointed you as a watchman for Israel. Whenever you receive a message from me, pass it on to the people immediately. **18**If I warn the wicked, saying, ‘You are under the penalty of death,’ but you fail to deliver the warning, they will die in their sins. And I will hold you responsible, demanding your blood for theirs. **19**If you warn them and they keep on sinning and refuse to repent, they will die in their sins. But you will have saved your life because you did what you were told to do.”

Hebrews 13:17 reminds of this and admonishes us:

17Obey your spiritual leaders and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they know they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this joyfully and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit.”

If a shepherd fails to “discern danger or fails to sound the alarm” to warn the flock—the Good Shepherd of the flock—will reveal it to them—and when He does... *The shepherd’s work goes beyond “feeding the flock”—to “sounding the alarm and warning the sheep”!*

This is the CALLING, MARK, AND DUTY of every good shepherd—especially WHEN the danger is “INSIDE” the camp! GOD LIKENS THOSE WHO DON’T/WON’T TO “DUMB DOGS THAT CANNOT BARK!” Hear the solemn words of the LORD from Isaiah 56:9-12.

3rd and lastly...

3. **"The LORD hates people with twisted hearts; but He delights in those who have integrity." Proverbs 11:20**

Leaders "snared" by a deceitful spirit CANNOT BE TRUSTED to serve the LORD and His people with "complete integrity" of heart. Those called to the ministry as a "pastor, shepherd, bishop, elder, overseer" are entrusted with the "care and oversight" of the ENTIRE FLOCK—and cannot "be partial or play favorites"—because they're "accountable" for ALL the sheep equally! Anything less than love and concern for ALL THE SHEEP would not only be a dereliction of duty but a danger to the entire flock!

Leaders [and followers] with "deceitful hearts" tend to work and serve out of 3 possible motivations:

- (1) a purely selfish desire to be "seen and heard".
- (2) for "what they can get out of it"!
- (3) or third, to "please the people" rather than "to please the Lord"!

WARNING TO ALL: DON'T LET SPECIAL FRIENDSHIPS, FAMILY OR FINANCIAL TIES—OR ANYTHING ELSE "INDEBT US TO PEOPLE"—TO THE EXTENT THAT WE'RE UNABLE TO DO WHAT'S RIGHT AND SERVE THE LORD AND ALL HIS PEOPLE WITH AN "UNDIVIDED HEART AND LOYALTY".

Most of the time IF and WHEN such people are "CONVICTED and BEFORE THE LORD EXPOSES THEM"—rather than "HUMBLE THEMSELVES" and SHOW THEY'VE REPENTED—they leave full of pride to pursue "greener pastures or start a following" elsewhere! Jesus said it best and clearest when He said in John 10:11-13:

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12A hired hand will run when he sees the wolf coming. He will leave the sheep because they aren't his and he isn't their shepherd. And so the wolf attacks them and scatters the flock. 13The hired hand runs away because he is merely hired and has no real concern for the sheep."

Paul addressed this very issue in what must've been a chilling meeting with "church elders" in Acts 20:17-38:

"28And now beware! Be sure that you feed and shepherd God's flock—his church, purchased with his own blood—over whom the Holy Spirit has appointed you as elders. 29I know full well that false teachers [IMPOSTERS], like vicious wolves, will come in among you after I leave, not sparing the flock. 30Even some of you will distort the truth [NOTE: Every distortion of the truth is a lie!] in order to draw a following. 31Watch out! Remember the three years I was with you—my constant watch and care over you night and day, and my many tears for you. 32And now I entrust you to God and the word of His grace that is able to build you up and give you an inheritance with all those He has set apart for Himself."

Go to 1 Peter 5:1-4.

"1And now, a word to you who are elders in the churches. I, too, am an elder and a witness to the sufferings of Christ. And I, too, will share His glory and His honor when He returns. As a fellow elder, I appeal to you:

2Care for the flock that God entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly—not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. 3Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your good example.

4And when the head Shepherd comes, your reward will be a never-ending share in His glory and honor."

2 Chronicles 19:4-9

"4Jehoshaphat lived in Jerusalem, but he went out among the people, traveling from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim, encouraging the people to return to the LORD, the God of their ancestors. 5He appointed judges throughout the nation in all the fortified towns, 6and he said to them, "Always think carefully before pronouncing judgment. Remember that you do not judge to please people but to please the LORD. He will be with you when you render the verdict in each case. 7Fear the LORD and judge with integrity, for the LORD our God does not tolerate perverted justice, partiality, or the taking of bribes."

8In Jerusalem, Jehoshaphat appointed some of the Levites and priests and clan leaders in Israel to serve as judges for cases involving the LORD's regulations and for civil disputes. 9These were his instructions to them: "You must always act in the fear of the LORD, with faithfulness and an undivided heart."

This same truth applies in principle and in deed in the New Testament.

The apostle Paul saw a "shocking turn of events" in the Church at Galatia and did what any called shepherd would do. Go to Galatians 1:6-10.

"6I am shocked that you are turning away so soon from God, who in His love and mercy called you to share the eternal life He gives through Christ. You are following a different way 7that pretends to be the Good News but is not the Good News at all. You are being fooled by those who twist and change the truth concerning Christ. 8Let God's curse fall on anyone, including myself, who preaches any other message than the one we told you about. Even if an angel comes from heaven and preaches any other message, let him be forever cursed. 9I will say it again: If anyone preaches any other Gospel than the one you welcomed, let God's curse fall upon that person. 10Obviously, I'm not trying to be a people pleaser! No, I am trying to please God. If I were still trying to please people, I would not [could not] be Christ's servant."

In the world, someone who "pleases the people" is often viewed as a "positive attribute".

But, when it comes to spiritual matters—to "be a people pleaser" disqualifies someone from serving the Lord!

Those who "serve to please the people or to be accepted by the people" are like CHAMELEONS—doing ONLY WHAT'S NECESSARY to get the "AMEN...the GOOD JOB BROTHER...or the GOOD JOB SISTER".

Such a person CANNOT be Christ's servant because "deceit" will invariably cause them to "promote and advance "their own agenda" rather than the Lord's agenda and what's BEST and MOST BENEFICIAL for His people!

LET ME BRIEFLY RECOUNT A MINISTRY EXPERIENCE WE HAD WITHIN MONTHS OF STARTING THE MINISTRY...

A FAMILY OF 6 or 7 CAME TO WHERE WE WERE MEETING AT THE TIME. AT THAT TIME, THERE WAS ONLY A "VERY FEW OF US". SO, TO HAVE AN INCREASE OF 6-7 NEW CONGREGANTS WAS ENCOURAGING.

[Sister Guffey, a precious saint, had warned us at the beginning that the enemy would come to attack the ministry]

ON THE SURFACE, EVERYTHING APPEARED TO BE IN ORDER...

AND EVERYONE IN THE FAMILY APPEARED JOYFUL AND DELIGHTED TO BE THERE.

BUT THE HUSBAND HAD "A DIFFERENT AGENDA". WHEN HUSBANDS AND WIVES HAVE "DIFFERENT AGENDAS or the same UNGODLY AGENDA"—THEY CAN DO A LOT OF DAMAGE!

IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE **"THE PRAISE AND THE AMENS" STOPPED: THAT WAS THE FIRST SIGN.**

DURING THE SUNDAY SERVICE AND BIBLE STUDY, HE WOULD SIT "SILENT AND SULLEN" WITH ARMS CROSSED AND LEAVE IMMEDIATELY AFTER SERVICE.

THE CUSTOMARY LINGERING AND BEING HELPFUL VANISHED: THAT WAS THE SECOND SIGN.

FROM TIME-TO-TIME, HE WOULD "TEASE ME" THAT GOD HAD "TOLD HIM SOMETHING" TO TELL ME OR HAD GIVEN HIM A MESSAGE FOR ME OR THE PEOPLE AT STRAIT GATE—BUT HE WOULDN'T SAY WHAT ITS WAS.

THIS WENT ON FOR SOME TIME...

I knew from listening to him that he wasn't on SOUND FOOTING with respect to important doctrine—so I knew he wasn't ready to teach, preach, or co-pastor. So, rather than crush him—I asked him to serve, listen to what we teach, and get to know the people

THEN, ONE SATURDAY, THE LORD MOVED ME TO REACH OUT TO HIM. IT WAS THEN THAT HE REVEALED THREE THINGS TO ME:

1) THE LORD HAD CALLED HIM AND ME AND OUR FAMILIES TO BE OVER THE MINISTRY,

2) THAT HE WAS ALSO CALLED TO PREACH AND TEACH THE PEOPLE...

3) AND THIRD, THAT WE NEEDED A BIGGER BUILDING.

Note: By "BIGGER"—I believed he meant "BIGGER...NICER...and in a BETTER" part of town!

HE WAS BEING "DECEITFUL" AND THAT'S WHY ALL "ATTEMPTS" AT BEING SPIRITUAL...SUPPORTIVE...AND RESPECTFUL EVENTUALLY DRIED UP. IT ALWAYS WILL!

BUT SINCE HIS MIND WAS ALREADY MADE UP AND HE WAS UNWILLING TO WAIT ON THE LORD...HE DECIDED TO MOVE HIS FAMILY ELSEWHERE. THAT EXPERIENCE WAS AN "UNFORGETTABLE LESSON" FOR SISTER DEIDRE AND ME!

1 TIMOTHY 5 and 1 TIMOTHY 3 HAVE BEEN "GUIDING PRINCIPLES" FOR ME.

WHEN IT COMES TO PASTORS AND ELDERS...1 Timothy 5:22

"Never be in a hurry about appointing an elder [church leader]. Do not participate in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure." 1 Timothy 5:22 NLT

Amp Bible: "Do not hurry to lay hands on anyone [ordaining and approving someone for ministry or an office in the church, or in reinstating expelled offenders], and thereby share in the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin."

WHEN IT COMES TO DEACONS...1 Timothy 3:8-10

8In the same way, deacons must be people who are respected and have integrity. They must not be heavy drinkers must not be greedy for money.

9They must be committed to the revealed truths of the Christian faith and must live with a clear conscience.

10Before they are appointed as deacons, they should be given [other responsibilities] in the church as a test of their character and ability [essentially their faithfulness]. If they do well, then they may serve as deacons." 1 Timothy 3:8-10

The wisdom of Scripture is given to us for a reason—primarily to follow and obey!

So, when it comes to this ministry—let me be LOUD and CLEAR:

I WILL NEVER knowingly ordain or entrust "YOUR SOULS AND THIS MINISTRY WORK" to just anyone—or just to keep them at Strait Gate—especially someone the Lord shows me is "actively influenced by or manipulated" by "a deceitful spirit"!

The LORD promised to give His people "Pastors and leaders with a heart like His"—who will guide His people with knowledge and understanding" (Jer. 3:15)—not "people pleasers" with "deceitful hearts"!

MY CLOSING THOUGHT AND INVITATION TO ETERNAL LIFE

Not surprisingly, it is a "deceitful spirit" that makes people think they have "more time to get saved" or get right with the Lord!

23Because of the miraculous signs He did in Jerusalem at the Passover celebration, many people were convinced that He was indeed the Messiah.

24But Jesus didn't trust them, because He knew what people were really like. **25**No one needed to tell Him about human nature." John 2:23-25

CAN JESUS TRUST YOU? DO YOU TRUST HIM? ARE YOU TRUSTING HIM TO SAVE YOU?

That's the end of Part 4 and the Message: "A DECEITFUL SPIRIT".

AND MAY THE GOD OF GRACE AND PEACE "GUARD OUR HEARTS" AND "PROTECT US WITH HIS TRUTH AND PEACE"! AMEN!