**THE DECEPTION OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS**

Sunday School Lesson 7

*Deceptions of the Devil*

2 Thessalonians 2:10

10/3/2021

**Introduction:** When we started this lesson series, we noted that sin as a whole is very deceptive. It takes on the character of its creator – the Devil. Those who are in the bondage of sin are in blindness to their own spiritual condition. As a reminder of what has been covered so far, we have looked at the deception of other gods, reaping, wisdom, hearing, pride, and the last day. For our lesson today, we are going to examine this thought through the deception of unrighteousness. Now, the term *unrighteousness* has its own meaning outside of just calling it sin, but ultimately the Bible tells us that all unrighteousness is sin. There is a distinction with this definition, though, that we want to focus on in our study today. The definition of unrighteousnessis simply any act or behavior that is not right. Every believer in Jesus Christ ought to desire to do right before the eyes of the Lord. There is a primary question, though, that needs to be answered when it comes to this topic of the deception of unrighteousness. What is right? That’s the question we all must answer each day when we make decisions. We must consider if we are making the right choices. The problem is that the Devil has deceived many into thinking that they are making the right choices. There are those who are living like the Devil, yet they believe they are righteous. They have been deceived. Let’s see how this happens.

1. **THE DECEPTION OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS PLACES NO VALUE ON EXTERNAL BEHAVIOR.**
2. **Notice that the Bible is clear regarding who does righteousness (1 John 3:7).** There were those in the days of the early church who were promoting ungodly ideas regarding Christian behavior. These same ideas are promoted today as well. Primarily, we see that there are those who strive to make external behavior irrelevant for the follower of God. This is undoubtedly what prompted the Holy Spirit to speak to us in 1 John 3:7. The Bible tells us there in the text that he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he (the Lord Jesus Christ) is righteous. Based on our definition of righteousness, this verse tells us that the person who does right is right. That should make perfect sense to us, as it is not a difficult concept to understand. Yet, there are those who try to dispute this simple idea. In order to do this, they have to invalidate external behavior. I think of the story in the Bible when the disciples rebuked a man who was going about teaching and preaching the message of Christ. He was not recognized as a disciple, so they did not feel that it was appropriate. Of course, the Lord had to teach His disciples. The evidence of this man’s discipleship was in his behavior. That was all the proof that they needed to receive the man.
3. **Notice that our imputed righteousness should manifest righteous behavior (Romans 3:22; 4:5-22; 6:19; 10:10; Ephesians 4:24; 5:9; Philippians 3:9; 2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Peter 2:24).** The deception of unrighteousness tries to tell the believer that he does not need to live righteously. After all, we have the righteousness of Christ imputed upon us. I’ve heard many who try to excuse unrighteous Christian behavior by pointing out that righteousness comes by faith. This is most assuredly true, but it is grossly used in improper context. Our faith makes us righteous in the eyes of God. Yet, if we are righteous, then that means that we should be doing right! This is why we are told to follow after righteousness. We are instructed to live unto righteousness. We are expected to do right! The Lord has created a new man within us to help us to live righteously. He has given us His Spirit to guide and direct us in the right way that we ought to go. Additionally, faith in the Lord should produce right decisions. Abraham believed God, and he acted upon that belief when he left his home. Rahab believed God, and she acted upon that belief when the spies came into the city. Don’t be deceived! Christians should live righteously.
4. **THE DECEPTION OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS PROMOTES BIBLICAL CRITICISM.**
5. **Notice that the Bible is clear regarding activities that are unrighteous (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 2 Peter 2:12-16; Leviticus 19:15; 1 Samuel 12:23; Proverbs 6:16-19).** The deception of unrighteousness runs into a major problem when confronted with the Truth that is the Word of God. The Bible plainly declares things that are unrighteous. We are not left to guess on what is right and what is wrong. The Bible wants to teach us in the right way. The News Testament lists some of the specific areas of unrighteousness in 1 Corinthians 6. We see fornication and adultery on the list of unrighteousness. We also find idolatry there. These are not things that should even be debated as right or wrong, yet the debate still occurs today. There are many church attenders who no longer see fornication as unrighteous. Proverbs 6 is another place that makes clear some things that God hates. A lying tongue is the second item on the list. Again, there should not be any debate that lying is wrong. Yet, you will find believers who accept that little white lies are fine. How can something so clear be missed by so many?
6. **Notice that the deception of unrighteousness must reject Biblical literalism in order to support its own positions (Genesis 3:1-7; Proverbs 30:5; Matthew 4:4).** We left the last point wondering how something that is clearly stated could still be missed. The only answer is that there must be a rejection of that which is stated. This is done through two avenues. Those who are without Christ are deceived into thinking that the Word of God does not need to be heeded at all. The believers who are deceived are persuaded that the Word of God does not need to be taken literally. It is astonishing how many professed Christians today do not hold to literal interpretation of the Bible. The Devil is the author of the critical approach to Biblical interpretation. In the Garden of Eden, he immediately questioned what the Word of God said and the intent behind His Word. The Word of God is pure. It is holy. It is perfect. We are to live by every word that we read in the Bible. How can we do that with a critical view of Scripture that allows for us to prioritize perceived intent over clear statement? The Devil loves doubting the Bible.
7. **THE DECEPTION OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS PRESENTS ITSELF AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.**
8. **Notice that unrighteousness may be viewed as right in our own eyes (Deuteronomy 12:8; Judges 17:6; 21:25; Job 32:1; Proverbs 12:15; 21:2).** This is the great deception of unrighteousness. It presents itself as righteousness. It is very difficult to convince someone who is wrong when they are absolutely convinced that they are in the right. We find this to be true when presenting the Gospel to those who are religious. They believe very strongly that they are right. The problem is that their righteousness is only being viewed from their own eyes. Our righteousness should be viewed through the eyes of the Lord. Of course, this goes back to a willingness to receive the Word of God without erroneous interpretation. When we don’t receive what He says is the right way, we are left then to perceive what we think is right. This is a very dangerous position to be in. 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 speaks of how unrighteousness deceives because people reject the Truth. They then can no longer see that their ways are wrong, so they go so far as to even take pleasure in their unrighteousness!
9. **Notice that the eyes of the Lord are the only ones that matter when it comes to righteousness; anything else will get us in trouble (Deuteronomy 13:18; 25:16; 1 Kings 11:33; 14:8; 15:5-11; 22:43; 2 Kings 10:30; 1 Samuel 15:22).** Every person has their own perception regarding events that are occurring all around them. Perception is the way that we see things from our own eyes. The problem is that our eyes can deceive us. Our perception ultimately cannot be trusted. The sooner we learn this as Christians the better off we will be in our service to the Lord. Every example in the Bible where men did right in their own eyes ends in catastrophe. King Saul is one example of this. He had to make a decision regarding what to do with the kings and the animals that were taken in battle. While he had been told to kill everyone and everything, the people did not want this to occur. Additionally, he may have had doubts himself on whether it was the best thing to do. He decided to spare the king. This brought the wrath of the Lord upon him. Saul blamed it on the people. He forgot that only one opinion mattered – God’s!
10. **THE DECEPTION OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS PREVAILS BECAUSE OF OBEDIENCE TO IT.**
11. **Notice that unrighteousness seeks our obedience and yielding to it (Romans 2:8; 6:13).** This is the deception of unrighteousness and sin in general. Once it deceives us into acceptance of it, then it expects our obedience and yielding to it. Again, remember that unrighteousness deceives by presenting itself as righteousness. Thus, it persuades the participant to continue in the unrighteousness with the full conviction that the individual is doing what is right. As believers, we know that we are to yield ourselves unto God. We know that we are to be obedient to righteousness. The Jews also knew this. This is why they were so devoted to the Law of God during the earthly ministry of Christ. Yet, can we say that they were obedient to righteousness? They thought that they were being obedient to doing that which was right, but the truth was much the opposite of that. Again, this ought to get our attention and cause us to evaluate whether we are truly doing that which is right in the eyes of the Lord.Are we obeying right?
12. **Notice that Satan’s ministers are often transformed as ministers of righteousness (2 Corinthians 11:14-15).** Last week, we looked at the deception of the last days. One of the observations with that deception is that it is propagated by false teachers. Again, we see this to be true with the deception of unrighteousness. The Bible tells us not to marvel that these ministers of the Devil are able to present themselves as ministers of the light. It seems to be a reoccurring theme throughout this lesson series that the influence of others plays a big part in keeping the deceptions of the Devil ongoing. This is the case with pride. This is also the case with the deception of wisdom. Notice how the world celebrates unrighteousness. They have cheerleaders who constantly preach what they present as righteousness. I believe that most of these things are obvious to the diligent believer, but I wonder how often we fall prey to similar deceptions by the influence of those around us.