


Madison Heights Christian Church   
(Disciples of Christ)  
149 Main Street  
Madison Heights, VA 24572

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## MADISON HEIGHTS MESSENGER

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### Do Not Be Deceived

The title is a bit of a paradox. You cannot stop yourself from being deceived because the root of deception is founded upon what is unknown or uncertain. In the realm of contemporary politics there has always been deception. Politicians get elected by appealing to emotions and twisting logic. My all time favorite college course was when I studied logic in my freshman year. The book we studied was *Logic and Contemporary Rhetoric* by Howard Kahane. We learned how to identify fallacious arguments and identify the disparity between logic and rhetoric.

Galatians 6:7 states "Do not be deceived." That is easier said than done because you do not always know when you are being deceived. Therefore, I think it is important to make an effort to double check the legitimacy of contemporary rhetoric whether it is in the realm of politics or religion. The Apostle Paul sees the church as a family where each member is responsible for one another. We are called to restore the lost in the spirit of gentleness and guard ourselves against temptation. This proverbial wisdom is a bit difficult to follow because the nature of deception is that it is designed to trick you. Sometimes you find out when it is too late. Sometimes you think you are not being deceived when you are. Sometimes you are the last to know. Often it is embedded ideology that gets in the way of logic and allows deception to seep into our lives.

The apostle Paul sees the Galatians as standing in danger of mocking God. It addresses transgression. It is easy to know the commandments. We know that whenever we do something that we should not do, whenever we break a commandment, or disobey the teachings of Jesus it is a sin. This is easy to grasp and understand. However, there is another degree of transgression that is not so easy to acknowledge and it is the trap of deception. It is when people believe God is OK with something when actually God is not. It is when people twist theology to suit the self instead of changing themselves to comply with the Word of God. The deceptive twist of theological doctrine is not OK with God. The Scripture is a call to be true to God. It is a call for reformation and getting right with God.

I remember a time when I was in a songwriting workshop and when the class found out that I am a pastor, the dynamics of the room changed. When people know the pastor is present they switch their songs that are to be evaluated and change their behavior. When someone swears they look at you and apologize. The group censors itself and this dilutes the realism of the environment. If you are true to your faith, you do not change due to the presence of the preacher. If you change your behavior due to the presence of the preacher you have already fallen away from God. That's like putting on your best behavior on Sunday morning and living a life of hypocrisy throughout the rest of the week. When we maintain a life of integrity with God, it eliminates the tendency to change our behaviors in the presence of another Christian for defensive posturing.

The standard that counts is God's standard. It is God that we are ultimately accountable to and there is no fooling God. Every thought, word, and action, has the potential to bear productive fruit or destructive fruit. Every day you have an opportunity to impact the world for good or evil. So, do not be deceived, life will trick you and the world we live in is full of temptation. You can deceive yourself and you can deceive others, but you cannot trick God.

Thank you,

*George*