

DECEPTION – A FATAL SIN NOT TO BE TAKEN LIGHTLY PART #1

Sometimes it may seem “legalistic” to some people who are religious as they observe other religious people who will not compromise when it comes to following God’s commandments exactly as they were given, not wavering to the left or to the right. It may seem that those who will not waver are stubborn, bigoted, self-righteous people, because they insist on following God’s instructions exactly as He commanded.

Many times the question or disagreement arises over how a command is to be carried out (whether exactly as it is given or altered in some way); whether it makes any difference as to the order in which it is carried out (such **believing, repenting, confessing** and **then being baptized for the forgiveness of sins**); if it is necessary to use the same method (being immersed in water for baptism); or even if it is necessary to actually obey the instructions in order to be acceptable to God. This is an area in which Satan has deceived many who questioned or changed or even ignored clear instructions.

Satan successfully deceived Eve when he introduced her to the sin of disobedience. God clearly said not to eat of the tree of knowledge good and evil for, He said, “... in the day you eat of it you will surely die” (**Genesis 2:16-17**). Satan, desiring to deceive Eve asked, “**Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’**” Satan was “baiting” Eve, getting her ready to question God’s clear command. She told Satan that God had said they could eat of all except the one in the middle of the garden, that, in fact, they were not even to touch it or they would die. Satan then said, “**You will not surely die,**” (**Genesis 3: 4 (NIV)**). Satan said the reason God didn’t want them to eat was, because they would “be like God, knowing good and evil” (appealing to her vanity). This brought Eve to see that the tree was good for food, appealing to the eye and desired to make one wise (**Genesis 3:6**). She submitted to the deception and ate of it. She then convinced her husband to eat also. Their eyes were opened so that they became aware that they were naked. Attempting to cover their nakedness, they sewed fig leaves together for clothes and then “hid from God” in the garden (**Genesis 3:9-11**).

Did it really make any difference if Adam and Eve broke just one of God’s commandments? It did if we believe that the bible is the inspired word of God and that God meant what He said when He gave the commandment! If He didn’t mean it, why command it? Were they punished as God promised they would be? The bible says they were. It states that they were **driven out of the Paradise God had placed them in and had to face the consequences for their sin – death!** (**Genesis 3:17-24**). This was spiritual death, which is being separated from God, as Paul explains to the Ephesians (**Ephesians 2:1-2 (NIV)**) 1 As for you, you were **dead in your transgressions and sins**, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.). This one sin made it necessary for God to sacrifice His only Son on the cross for their (and our) sin. It introduced sin into the world and all the terrible things that have ever, and are happening today, are traceable back to that one act of disobedience! “Therefore, **just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned— ...**” (**Romans 5:12 (NIV)**). The introduction of sin (**even this one sin**) into the world opened the possibility for each and every person to know good and evil and, with Satan’s constant and diligent effort to cause every person to sin, sin has multiplied and increased!

Moses was a great and faithful leader whom God used to lead the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage. Moses placed his life in jeopardy with Pharaoh, king of Egypt, in order to obey what God told him to do! But he did it because he had faith in God! Moses led the Israelites across the Red Sea because he followed God's command to lift up his staff and part the sea (**Exod 14:16**). Someone might have said, "Is it necessary to lift up the staff to part the Sea? If God is God and has all power, why should Moses have to lift up his staff to part it, couldn't God just part the Sea?" Yes, but He chose to give Moses instructions to do it that way and Moses, having faith, did it!

At yet another time Moses was given specific instructions to provide the Israelites water in the wilderness as they were wandering about. The people had been complaining and after bringing it before the Lord, 5 The LORD answered Moses, "**Walk on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6 I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.**" So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. Exodus 17:5-6 (NIV) **Moses did as he was instructed and the problem was taken care of – water came from the rock.**

On another occasion the Israelites quarrelled with Moses about the problem of not having water and Moses was so stressed and irritated with the people that he did not follow God's specific instructions. God told Moses to take his staff with him and **speak** to the rock. 10 He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, "Listen, you rebels, **must we** bring you water out of this rock?" 11 **Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff.** Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank. (**Numbers 20:10-11 (NIV)**). Because of Moses' and Aaron's disobedience God told Moses and Aaron, "**...Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them.**" (**Numbers 20:12 (NIV)**). Moses (and Aaron) **took credit** ("Listen, you rebels, **must we** bring you water out of this rock?") along with God in providing the water and instead of **speaking to the rock Moses struck it twice!** Did God accept this "**little**" change in what He had told Moses? **NO!** Both Moses and Aaron were punished for changing the clear instructions God had given by not being allowed to enter the Promised Land they had been working, struggling, and suffering so long to enter.

Nadab and Abihu was sons of Aaron the high priest and they, themselves, were priests duly appointed by God. They went up to the Tent of Meeting during a period of worship to offer up a sacrifice to the Lord. But, even though the Lord had instructed them what to offer they put fire on their **censers** (censer - *maḥtāh*, **describing the vessel used for carrying the charcoal on which the incense was burnt**). It was of a size sufficient to contain a quantity of live coals, so as to burn at least two handfuls of incense (**Leviticus 16:12**),¹ added incense, as they were supposed to, but there was something wrong with what they did. Rather than offering up what God had commanded, they offered up "**strange fire**" (KJV), "**unauthorized fire**" (NIV) to the Lord. This is recorded in **Leviticus 10:1 (NIV)** "Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their **censers**, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered **unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command.**" It is obvious as we read the next few verses that their decision to change what God had clearly commanded was unacceptable to God.

¹Vine, W.E.; Bruce, F.F.: *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. Old Tappan NJ: Revell, 1981; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996, S. 1:XI-49

First, fire came down from the presense of the Lord and consumed Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:2). **Secondly**, Moses, knowing what had happened and what God had said concerning a matter like this, said to Aaron (the father of Nadab and Abihu), ...**“This is what the LORD spoke of when he said:” ‘Among those who approach me I will show myself holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honored.’” Aaron remained silent.** (Leviticus 10:3 (NIV)). **Why did Aaron remain silent?** After all, he had just lost two of his sons! Aaron, unlike his sons, had greater respect for Jehovah God! He knew not to question His decision to destroy his sons because he recognized God as God and not man! These priests, sons of Aaron, had not honored God because they offered up to Him something He had not commanded. **This was not only an act of disobedience to the God of Heaven; it was an act of total disrespect for His Deity, His Holiness, and His supremacy.** Nadab and Abihu placed themselves in the place of God by usurping His authority and **offering what they desired instead of what God commanded.**

When people change or ignore a clear teaching or command from God today, is it any different than when Nadab and Abihu did it in their day? He is the same Sovereign God! To fail to keep, change, or ignore a command is placing us in the position of being higher in authority than God. If God records a command it is to be followed by faith in love and respect for who He is.

The Israelites understood when God gave them the Ten Commandments they were not Ten Suggestions.

We don't have to understand the logic of a command. God does not give commands that are meaningless or un-necessary.

Romans 10:17 (NIV) 17 Consequently, **faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.**

Hebrews 11:6 (NIV) 6 And **without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.**