



Lesson 24: “Be Not Deceived, but Continue in Steadfastness”, Doctrine and Covenants 26; 28; 43:1–7; 50; 52:14–19; *Our Heritage*, page 36.

Introduction



These phrases all have something in common. They are all reasons given by early Church members for their apostasy from the Church.

This lesson discusses how to avoid individual apostasy. These phrases and the stories that go with them are explained later in the lesson.

We should recognize the deceptions of Satan that can lead us into apostasy.

During the early years of the Church, some members were deceived by Satan and led into apostasy, or rebellion against God. A few members who apostatized became enemies of the Church and contributed to the persecutions of the Saints in Ohio and Missouri. As members of the Church today, we must be faithful and watchful so we are not deceived.

D&C 50:2-3 and **2 Nephi 2:18, 27** remind us that Satan seeks to overthrow us and make us as miserable as he is. We are also reminded that we are free to choose to follow him if we so desire.

The following are some of Satan’s temptations that could and would lead us into apostasy:

Not recognizing the prophet as the source of revelation for the Church

Some members are deceived by false prophets. The following account shows how several early Saints were temporarily deceived by false revelations.

In 1830, Hiram Page, one of the Eight Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, possessed a stone through which he claimed to receive revelations about the building of Zion and the order of the Church.

Oliver Cowdery, the Whitmers, and others believed these claims. However, the Prophet Joseph Smith said the claims “were entirely at variance with the order of God’s house, as laid down in the New Testament, as well as in our late revelations” (*History of the Church*, 1:110).

The Prophet prayed about the matter and received a revelation in which the Lord made clear that only the President of the Church has the right to receive revelations for the Church (D&C 28). The Lord instructed Oliver Cowdery to tell Hiram Page that the revelations that came through the stone were from Satan (D&C 28:11). After hearing the Lord’s instructions, “*Brother Page, as well as the whole Church who were present, renounced the said stone, and all things connected therewith*” (*History of the Church*, 1:115).

Lesson Highlights

- We should recognize the deceptions of Satan that can lead us into apostasy.
- We can remain valiant in our testimonies and avoid deception.

A study of this lesson will help us understand how they can avoid deception and apostasy.

Next Week

25: Priesthood: “The Power of Godliness”, Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–44; 107; 121:34–46; *Our Heritage*, pages 26–27.

Pride

Some members are deceived because of their pride. The following story illustrates how pride led Thomas B. Marsh, who was President of the Quorum of the Twelve, and his wife, Elizabeth, into apostasy.

While living in Far West, Missouri, Sister Marsh and Sister Harris decided to exchange milk so they could each make a larger cheese than they otherwise could. They agreed to send each other both the milk and the cream from their cows. But Sister Marsh saved a pint of cream from each cow and sent Sister Harris the milk without the cream.

A quarrel arose, and the matter was referred to the bishop. When he determined that Sister Marsh had violated her agreement, she and her husband were upset and appealed the matter to the high council and then to the First Presidency. Each council approved the original decision that Sister Marsh had been in error.

Thomas B. Marsh declared that he would sustain the character of his wife. Soon afterward, he turned against the Church and went before a government official to declare that the Latter-day Saints were hostile toward the state of Missouri. (See George A. Smith, in *Journal of Discourses*, 3:283–84.)

President Gordon B. Hinckley said of this incident: *“What a very small and trivial thing—a little cream over which two women quarreled. But it led to, or at least was a factor in, Governor Boggs’ cruel exterminating order which drove the Saints from the state of Missouri, with all of the terrible suffering and consequent death that followed. The man who should have settled this little quarrel, but who, rather, pursued it, ... lost his standing in the Church. He lost his testimony of the gospel”* (in Conference Report, Apr. 1984, 111; or *Ensign*, May 1984, 83).

After 19 years of darkness and bitterness, Thomas B. Marsh painfully made his way to the Salt Lake Valley and asked Brigham Young to forgive him and permit his rebaptism into the Church. He wrote to Heber C. Kimball, First Counselor in the First Presidency: *“I began to awake to a sense of my situation; ... I know that I have sinned against Heaven and in thy sight.”* He then described the lesson he had learned: *“The Lord could get along very well without me and He has lost nothing by my falling out of the ranks; But O what have I lost?! Riches, greater riches than all this world or many planets like this could afford”* (quoted by James E. Faust, in Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 6; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 7).

Being critical of leaders’ imperfections

Some members are deceived because they become critical of Church leaders’ imperfections. The following story illustrates how Simonds Ryder was deceived in this way.

Simonds Ryder was converted to the Church in 1831. Later he received a letter signed by the Prophet Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, informing him that it was the Lord’s will, made manifest by the Spirit, that he preach the gospel. Both in the letter he received and in the official commission to preach, his name was spelled *Rider* instead of *Ryder*. Simonds Ryder *“thought if the ‘Spirit’ through which he had been called to preach could err in the matter of spelling his name, it might have erred in calling him to the ministry as well; or, in other words, he was led to doubt if he were called at all by the Spirit of God, because of the error in spelling his name!”* (*History of the Church*, 1:261). Simonds Ryder later apostatized from the Church.

Being offended

Some Church members become offended by the actions of other members and allow an offense to fester until they are led into apostasy. An example of this is illustrated in the following incident.

When the Kirtland Temple was completed, many Saints gathered for the dedication. The seats in the temple filled quickly, and many people were allowed to stand, but still not everyone could be accommodated inside the building. Elder Frazier Eaton, who had given \$700 for the building of the temple, arrived after it had been filled, so he was not allowed inside for the dedication. The dedication was repeated the next day for those who could not be accommodated the first day, but this did not satisfy Frazier Eaton, and he apostatized. (See George A. Smith, in *Journal of Discourses*, 11:9.)

If we are ever offended, the Lord has given counsel of what we are required to do in **D&C 64:8–11** and **82:1**—forgive! No exceptions!

Rationalizing disobedience

Rationalizing is excusing or defending unacceptable behavior. It is looking for a way to ease our consciences for doing something we know is wrong.

Elder Carlos E. Asay, one of the Seventy, taught that the following actions can strengthen us in avoiding apostasy:

- “Avoid those who would tear down your faith
- “Keep the commandments
- “Follow the living prophets
- “Do not contend or debate over points of doctrine
- “Search the scriptures
- “Do not be swayed or diverted from the mission of the Church
- “Pray for your enemies
- “Practice ‘pure religion’ [See James 1:27 and Alma 1:30]
- “Remember that there may be many questions for which we have no answers and that some things have to be accepted simply on faith” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1981, 67–68)



Accepting the false teachings of the world

False ideas and philosophies accepted by some members include that God's commandments are far too restrictive, that immorality is okay, and that worldly pursuits and riches are more important than family and spiritual responsibilities. Presiding Bishop H. David taught: "*One of [Satan's] insidious strategies is to progressively soften our senses regarding what is right and wrong.*"

We can remain valiant in our testimonies and avoid deception.

Blessings and commandments from the Lord can help us remain valiant and avoid deception.

The following are ways in which we can protect ourselves:

We can know clearly whom the Lord has called to lead the Church

In the early years, many people claimed to have received revelations to correct the Church or the Prophet. The Lord revealed **D&C 28** and **43** in response to such false claims and explained that the Prophet receives revelation for the Church and none other is appointed to do so. (See D&C 28:2, 6-7 and 43:1-3).

President Joseph F. Smith taught: "The Lord has...appointed one man at a time on the earth to hold the keys of revelation to the entire body of the church in all its organizations, authorities, ordinances and doctrines. The spirit of revelation is bestowed upon all its members for the benefit and enlightenment of each individual receiving its inspiration, and according to the sphere in which he or she is called to labor. But for the entire Church, he who stands at the head is alone appointed to receive revelations by way of commandment and as the end of controversy" (*Messages of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, [1965-75], 4:270)

We should study the scriptures and the doctrines of the Church

D&C 1:37 and 33:16. We can better discern the truth of ideas by comparing them to the doctrines in the "standard" works. **President Harold B. Lee** taught: "*If [someone] writes something or speaks something that goes beyond anything that you can find in the standard Church works, unless that one be the prophet, seer, and revelator—please note that one exception—you may immediately say, 'Well, that is his own idea.'* And if he says something that contradicts what is found in the standard Church works, you may know by that same token that it is false" (*The Teachings of*

Satan would have us convinced that it is fashionable to lie and cheat. He encourages us to view pornography by suggesting that it prepares us for the real world. He would have us believe that immorality is an attractive way of life and that obedience to the commandments of our Father in Heaven is old-fashioned. Satan constantly bombards us with deceptive propaganda desirably packaged and carefully disguised" (Ensign, May 1993, 46)

Harold B. Lee, ed. Clyde J. Williams [1996], 540-41).

President Lee also taught: "*If we are not reading the scriptures daily, our testimonies are growing thinner, our spirituality isn't increasing in depth"* (*The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, 152).

We should recognize that the things of God will always edify us

The Prophet Joseph Smith explained that soon after the Saints were settled in Kirtland, "*many false spirits were introduced, many strange visions were seen, and wild, enthusiastic notions were entertained; men ran out of doors under the influence of this spirit, and some of them got upon the stumps of trees and shouted, and all kinds of extravagances were entered into by them; ... many ridiculous things were entered into, calculated to bring disgrace upon the Church of God, to cause the Spirit of God to be withdrawn"* (*History of the Church*, 4:580). Concerned by these excessive spiritual displays, the Prophet inquired of the Lord. The revelation in D&C 50 is the Lord's response.

President Joseph Fielding Smith taught: "*There is no saying of greater truth than 'that which doth not edify is not of God.'* And that which is not of God is darkness, it matters not whether it comes in the guise of religion, ethics, philosophy or revelation. No revelation from God will fail to edify" (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 2 vols. [1953], 1:201-2)

We should apply the Lord's pattern for protecting ourselves from being deceived. The Lord revealed D&C 52 the day after a conference in Kirtland. In this revelation He provides a pattern by which we can avoid being deceived.

D&C 52:14-19 these verses mention characteristics of teachers who are "of God".

Deceptions of Satan can be overcome by following the directions and counsel given by the Lord and His servants. We can have the companionship of the Spirit to keep us on the straight and narrow path.

Gospel Doctrine Notebook

Record your thoughts on the teachings discussed in this lesson.

- How have you seen pride lead people into deception and apostasy?
- What have you done when you had difficulty forgiving someone?
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