

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

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SYSTEMATIZING THE DECEPTION

According to Paul, the body of Christ is to mature until we attain to the unity of the faith and of the realization of the son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the complement of the Christ, that we may by no means still be minors, surging hither and thither and being carried about by every wind of teaching, by human caprice, by craftiness with a view to the systematizing of the deception. (Ephesians 4.13-14 CV)

There is a secular expression that says: *Get on the bandwagon*. According to Wikipedia, it is called “the bandwagon effect” and is the observation that people do and believe things because many other people do and believe the same things. Simply, people tend to follow the crowd without examining the merits of a particular thing. Unfortunately, the bandwagon effect can be quite successful and gather up a lot of people. It is like a fad and referred to as the “herd mentality.” The more people who go along with it the more people will join it without examining it carefully. As they say, people “hop on the bandwagon.”

The bandwagon originated as a wagon that carried a band in a parade, circus, or other entertainment, and the phrase “jump on the bandwagon” was first used in American politics. People (voters) would jump on political bandwagons, that is, support certain candidates for office, not necessarily based on the merits of the candidate’s positions. In our modern age of instant communications, polls, focus groups, and biases from the news media, it is easy to see how a nation can become so fixated on politics and so steered by the views of the news media and the almost endless number of so-called experts and commentators that people jump on the bandwagon of candidates, not so much based on facts but much more on what the herd is doing.

Now, this might seem like I am about to launch into a discussion of the present race for the next President of the US. I have my opinions about the race, but this is not what is on my mind. Actually, I am thankful that we have a King who is seated on the throne and ready to come to this earth to set things right. Boy; do we need Him to come soon to do just that!

Nevertheless, the whole matter of bandwagons came to me as I was meditating on what is going on in the visible “church” of our day, and what I had just written on the matter. As I meditated, the word *fad* came to me, and I felt that I was to do a word search and look at the first thing that came along. Well, it was this matter of bandwagon that popped up, which seemed to fit very neatly with what I had recently written.

It seems to me that some (perhaps, many) of the Lord’s people hop on the bandwagon because many others are doing it. By this, I mean that there is a herd mentality amongst the Lord’s people that leads them to follow after every new wind that blows through the pews and bookstores. For example, someone writes a book and someone with a name endorses it and the next thing you know it is a best seller and the author is a new leader of the modern-day church. It matters not if there are things in the book that are not quite according to Scripture or are extra-Biblical in an inaccurate sort of way. What matters to the masses is that everyone else is reading it or following it (whatever it is).

This leads me to the verse quoted above, especially the phrase *the systematizing the deception*. I quote the *Concordant Version* because it seems to capture the heart of what Paul meant. Other

translations use phrases like *systematized error* (DNT), *clever strategies that would lead us astray* (ISV), and *plot to seduce in their subtlety* (JMT).

I believe Paul was conveying to the ecclesia that a system of thought could be developed based on error, especially based on a spirit to deceive, that becomes a system of thought that permeates how one views many things. Further, the greatest danger exists for those that are immature.

Systematizing is not merely accepting something false; it is building an entire framework based on a deception, so that everything is seen through this deception. An example of how the systematizing works is how Paul's hope of the out-resurrection has been so distorted. If, as held by many in our day, that every believer immediately goes to heaven *in* death, then this becomes a framework by which all other Scripture related to such things as death, life, soul, resurrection, and judgment is explained. Consequently, when Paul wrote that he would rather be out of the body *and* at home with the Lord, such a framework demands that Paul taught that when a believer dies he goes to heaven immediately, which is contrary to Paul's expectation of the *out-resurrection* (Philippians 3.11). The result is that the one thing that is essential to the hope of believers is systematically put in a lower place of importance, ignored, or distorted.

One of Satan's greatest achievements has been systematizing the deception. He has not only succeeded in taking what is false but in taking it and packaging it into a systematic framework and then passing it off as the truth of Scripture. It appears as light but at its very core is darkness. Many of God's people have been hooked into various frameworks of deception. I confess that at times in my life I have, so I only have the greatest amount of compassion on my brethren who write and teach in this day. I pray frequently that I not fall into deception but remain open to correction in all that I see or write.

I suspect that there are many such examples of systematized deception in the doctrines and teachings of the "church." Many of them have become the traditions of men and those who teach them are simply pawns in the game of deception. This does not necessarily mean that they are deceivers, but that they have been deceived themselves and are simply passing the deception along to others who willingly jump on the bandwagon without verifying if it is truth or not. Unfortunately, I believe that there is even a more insidious thing happening in our day. When people are warned that something is amiss, they don't seem to want to hear it or to care that it might be off. It is as if they have become dull of hearing or hardened to the truth. They are more interested in being excited, or, as Paul warned, the time will come that **they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths** (2 Timothy 4.3-4 NASB). Are we so naïve to think that this cannot happen in our day? It is not uncommon to hear people respond to such challenges that "God is much bigger than that" or "no one has all the truth." To this last point, this is true, for we all see dimly, but this should not be an excuse for being lazy with the truth, not verifying what we hear or read, or worse, desiring to hear only what appeals to us, that is, tickles our ear.

In our day of instant gratification and media intensity, we need to question any new so-called spiritual matter, event, or teaching, especially when everyone is jumping on the bandwagon. My warning to all that have an ear to hear is that the Christian bandwagon of our day may lead you astray and away from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. Perhaps, it is time for some to jump off the bandwagon and cling to Christ and Him alone. It is time to grow up, to mature in Christ.

Dear beloved in Christ, let us not jump on every new bandwagon that comes along. Let us be as shrewd as serpents and as innocent as doves. Let us discern in spirit all that we hear and see. Let us test the spirits. Let us look for true fruit of the spirit, the fruit of righteousness. Let us **love the truth**, seek to **know the truth**, and **walk in the truth** (2 John 1, 4).