

Undercurrents

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This past summer, I read articles about people dying in and from the results of undercurrents in the ocean near the shore. One person who caught my attention was a strong retired professional athlete who was swimming in the ocean with friends. While they were struggling to make it back to shore, he drowned. Undercurrents are a strong current of water that is moving below the surface. Often, they can be deceptively strong and deadly, for they can pull people away from the shore and even pull them under. Often, when undercurrents are known, officials will put out red flags to warn swimmers, surfers, and such that it is dangerous to go out into the waters.

This caused me to stop and consider the waters of life. In the waters of life, there are many unseen undercurrents that attempt to pull you and me away from THE Rock and the shores of safety (2 Samuel 22:2, 32, 47). Sometimes, there are red flags, and we ignore them. Other times, things appear to be normal — a beautiful sunny day with a cool wind blowing and the waves gently falling onto the shore. There is the temptation to think, “I am strong enough. I can handle it; I know better.” The devil is an old pro at making situations appear as something they are not. We are warned that he can appear as an angel of light, which he is not (1 Corinthians 11:14). He is the author of confusion because God is not (1 Corinthians 14:33). He and his henchmen twist the truth to the destruction of many un-discerning souls (2 Peter 3:14-16). For a text taken out of context is a pretext.

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world (1 Peter 5:8-9).

The devil, our adversary, offers many attractions and distractions in life. This world is his domain. The undercurrents of temptations and worldliness can gently sway and move us — they are so subtle that we don't notice or recognize what is happening. If we are not careful, the gentle sway of the undercurrents and flow of this world will carry us further away than we could ever imagine.

We read in Joshua 9 about the crafty deception of the Gibeonites. Earlier, in chapter 8, Joshua and the children of Israel were coming off a great victory at Ai. They had built an altar to the LORD, sacrificed burnt offerings and peace offerings, and read in the presence of all the assembly all that was written in the Book of the Law (8:34-35). They must have been feeling really good. Often when things appear to be going well, we have a tendency to let our guard down, trusting in our own wisdom and strength. This appears to have happened to Joshua and the leaders of Israel, for they “*did not ask counsel of the LORD*” (Joshua 9:14). They were deceived by the cunning craftiness of the men of Gibeon, who presented their old worn out sacks, torn and mended wineskins, old and patched sandals, worn out clothes, and dry and moldy bread. These all gave the appearance that the Gibeonites had come from a very distant country. Their pretense and lies worked: Joshua and the leaders of Israel were mesmerized by the illusion. They made an unwise covenant with the people of Gibeon, which they were not to do. They did not seek the wisdom and guidance from the King in whose service they were employed.

If we are not careful and discerning, seeking God's will through His word, and striving to please Him in all that we do and say, we can be found guilty of similar offenses. Deception can come from the outside; and also from the inside. When we want something, we can turn a blind eye to the facts, to the truth, because we want it to be true. We deceive ourselves.

Paul warns and tells us, “*Let no one deceive himself*” (1 Corinthians 1:18a). “*So that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs*” (2 Corinthians 2:11, ESV). Our heavenly Father puts out the red flags

through His word, through His people proclaiming and sharing His word. He doesn't want us to be deceived, sucked under by the undercurrents or drift away from Him.

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance (2 Peter 3:9, ESV).

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded (James 4:7-8, ESV).

If you are being pulled under, drifting away from the Lord and safety, it is not hopeless. That is another lie from “the father of lies” (John 8:44). “Reach out to Jesus, He's reaching out to you.” Reach out in obedient faith (Romans 1:5; 16:26), submitting to Him and His plan. There is help and safety for the soul in the Lord!