



James 1:19-27 Part 4: Understanding and Defeating Self-Deception

March 24, 2015

Text: Jam 1:19-27 (emphasis on verse 22 today)

- *Self-deception*: "Deception concerning one's self proceeding from one's own mistake." Webster 1828
- *To Deceive*: To mislead the mind; to cause to err; to cause to believe what is false, or disbelieve what is true; to impose on; to delude. Webster 1825
- James declares that when one makes the mistake of hearing and not doing, that person is self-deceived.
- The difficult part about self-deception is that the one deceived rarely knows it; that's why it is deception!
- This is an awful predicament to be in. No one says, "Hey, I'm self-deceived!" Everyone thinks they are right. ☺
- Self-deception flows out of our sin-nature and is cultivated by our natural desire to take authority for ourselves (Genesis 3).
- Self-deception normally must be diagnosed from the "**outside**:" The Spirit's activity in our lives, the preaching and accountability of the Word, or a good friend "telling you about yourself" as examples. ☺
- Remember, James is talking to Christians! This is the danger of the believer closing him/herself off, refusing to listen, gathering ungodly counsel around themselves, or refusing the authority of the local church. These things feed our deceptions.
- Friends, NO ONE has it all right. NO ONE is above learning. WE ALL need teachers and accountability! ☺
- The Bible actually says quite a bit about self-deception.

Some of what the Bible says about self-deception:

- *Jas 1:26 ESV* If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.
- *Oba 1:3 ESV* The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rock, in your lofty dwelling, who say in your heart, "Who will bring me down to the ground?"
- *1Co 3:18 ESV* Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise.
- *1Co 6:9-10 ESV* Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, (10) nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.
- *1Co 15:33 ESV* Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals."
- *Gal 6:3 ESV* For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.
- *Gal 6:6-10 ESV* One who is taught the word must share all good things with the one who teaches. (7) Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. (8) For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. (9) And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. (10) So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.
- *1Jn 1:8 ESV* If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

- *Jer 37:9 ESV* Thus says the LORD, Do not deceive yourselves, saying, "The Chaldeans will surely go away from us," for they will not go away.
- *Jer 17:9-10 ESV* The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? (10) "I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds."
- *Rev 3:16-17 ESV* So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. (17) For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.
- *Jer 5:30-31 ESV* An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land: (31) the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule at their direction; my people love to have it so, but what will you do when the end comes?
- *Jer 23:16-18 ESV* Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD. (17) They say continually to those who despise the word of the LORD, 'It shall be well with you'; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, 'No disaster shall come upon you.'" (18) For who among them has stood in the council of the LORD to see and to hear his word, or who has paid attention to his word and listened?

10 Ways We Deceive Ourselves:

The list below is based on my experiences over the years and my own struggles with my own sin. Be a good Berean and judge for yourselves. ☺

1. **We Fake Ignorance:** I don't understand (because I don't want to), so I need to study it for ten years. (Jn 8:43, 47)
2. **We Procrastinate:** I understand but I'm thinking about it...hopefully, until I forget about it.
3. **We Presume:** "I'm not going to obey, and God is okay with that." Or..."God said that but he doesn't mean that."
4. **We Idolize our Sin:** "This is my one area of disobedience."
5. **We adopt an Entitlement Mentality:** "Because of my hurts and pains, God is okay if I skip this one."
6. **We adopt a Crowd Mentality:** "Everybody disobeys this! I'll be inconvenienced, embarrassed, lose money, fill in the blank _____!"
7. **We use The Inappropriate Scale:** "This particular obedience isn't as important as the Gospel!"
8. **We use The Legalism Defense:** "Walking with Jesus isn't about keeping rules; it's about relationship. We are saved by grace!"
9. **We have Itching Ears:** We seek out people who agree with our wrong. (2 Tim 4:3)
10. **We sometimes, just Blatantly Rebel:** "It's not right what I'm doing; I know it's not right, but tough and oh-well."

Defeating Self-Deception

Although we will all fight this battle everyday of our lives, here are a few suggestions to beat this monster of self-deceit more often than not! ☺

1. **Approach the Word meekly, or with great humility and reverence. (Jam 1:21)**
2. **Commit to being both a hearer and a doer of the Word. (Jam 1:22)**
3. **Obey quickly! *Psa 119:60 ESV* I hasten and do not delay to keep your commandments.**
4. **Submit to and obey good leaders. *Heb 13:17 ESV* Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.**

5. **Gather and listen to GODLY counselors...people who hear and do themselves!** *Pro 24:6 ESV*
...for by wise guidance you can wage your war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory.

You might notice I didn't list prayer and study in and of themselves. Are those things important? Yes! But the Pharisees prayed a lot and studied a lot and walked in maybe the greatest self-deception ever due to their pride:

Joh 5:39-40 ESV You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, (40) yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

In conjunction with a life of prayer and study, the believer MUST walk in humility, must actually obey, must actually do so quickly, must actually remain teachable, must actually submit themselves to authority and a community of believers, and must actually be willing to be corrected.

Remember, the very Epistle of James is encouraging all of these things.

Final Thoughts:

We know Satan is a deceiver. But our text is addressing a different type of deception, just as insidious because it, in my opinion, afflicts the church easier than demons and devils. Self-deception is easy because it is so similar to pride, the chief sin of our flesh.

Think about it: **how much pride does it take to read or hear GOD's WORD and say, "Nah, not me.?" A lot!**

Jesus wants us to both listen and obey:

"Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you? (47) Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: (48) he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. (49) But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great." Luke 6:46-49 ESV

Precious friends, God's Word is GOOD. Part of the deception is to think it is anything other than good and wonderful. But when we listen and obey, we build our "houses" on the Rock!

May we all do just that, for His glory alone.

Amen.