

## Self-Deception: An Enemy Within

(Go To Meeting)

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Self-deception, that's what I'm going to be speaking on. What does the Bible say about self-deception? As many other topics, you can take a lot of topics and just expand on it.

We're going to answer a couple of questions today, and just take one facet of self-deception and answer those questions.

What is written about self-deception in the Bible? We live in a world of lies and deceit coming from many, many sources. We can come and see that now more than ever. There are lying spirits who lead us astray.

1-Timothy 4:1: "Now, the Spirit tells *us* explicitly that in *the* latter times some shall apostatize from the faith, *and* shall follow deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons."

There's probably been no time than that is more prevalent than now. We are seeing this expanding on a basis that is uncontrollable at times. There are evil-doers and imposters looking for dupes at all times.

2-Timothy 3:13: "But wicked men and imposters... [which we are seeing now] ...shall become worse and worse, deceiving *others* and being deceived *themselves*."

That's where the self-deception comes in. Perhaps the most insidious, we have ourselves to deal with. We personally have ourselves to deal with so that we can avoid that self-deception.

Self-deception is common in our fallen world and everything that's going on around it. Unfortunately, it also is common in the Churches of God; from the past and in the present.

Our own heart is deceitful, so much so that *we can easily fool ourselves!*

Jeremiah 17:9: "**The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;** who can know it?"

Isaiah 44:20: "He feeds on ashes; **a deceived heart has turned him aside,** so that he cannot deliver his soul. Neither does he say, '*Is this not a falsehood in my right hand?*'"

He speaks of an idolater who is misled by his own deluded heart!

The prophet Obadiah identifies arrogance as one of the roots of self-deception. Have we not seen that in the past? *Arrogance!*

Obadiah 1:3: **The pride of your heart has deceived you...**"

Human pride always blinds us to the Truth! It promises honor, but it delivers disgrace.

Proverbs 16:18: "**Pride goes before destruction,** and a haughty spirit before a fall."

With this introduction I will be spending a lot of time in the book of James, as it expounds on this subject very, very well. It contains timeless and deeply spiritual concepts that need to become part of our Christian lives.

In this letter to all of Israel, and to us the Church of God, James addresses the matter of going on to perfection through faith.

- faith is a personal belief in God the Father
- faith is personal belief in Jesus Christ, the Son of God
- faith is in the mind and heart
- faith is accepting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins

*Faith by itself does not entitle us to **eternal life!***

James addresses a problem in the Church then and it still is present now: *whereby some through that faith **thought that was the only the requirement of salvation!***

When reading in Eph. 2, Scriptures when taken out of context, it would probably indicate that faith alone is sufficient. But Paul wrote to the Ephesians in:

Ephesians 2:8: "For **by grace you have been saved through faith,** and this *especially* is not of your own selves; **it is the gift of God,**"

One of the purposes of the Epistle of James is to show how faith and works are both vital and very vital to salvation. God's grace gives us faith, and our lives, mind and heart changes completely.

James 2 shows that a true faith, a right faith, produces good works. *Godly faith* results in good works.

James 2:17: "In the same way also, **faith, if it does not have works, is dead,** by itself.

Very plainly stated, *a right faith must have works!* Ask the question of our self, personally:

- What are my works?
- Are my works what they should be so that I will not have that dead faith as described in

the Scriptures?

Let's talk about works for a moment. I have found over the years in the Churches of God that sometimes this concept of work is sometimes very nebulous and vague. Or the people make it to be that way.

What does James mean by *works*? James used the same Greek word for works that Paul used: 'ergon' where we get the English word *energy*, which means *to work, to toil, to labor* as being doers of the Word, *doing, acting out, action*.

James 1:22: "Then **be doers of the Word, and not only hearers**, deceiving your own selves."

So we see that we cannot just hear the Word, **but we must do the Word!** How are we doers of the Word? *It is important for us to understand that!* When James says *works*, he is speaking of Godly actions. Works are any deed that are in accordance with God's purpose, like:

- serving others
  - laying down our lives
  - to help others into the Kingdom of God
  - keeping the Ten Commandments
- very, very basic*
- making personal sacrifices for the sake of others

*Works doing things according the Word of God!*

Our works are nothing less than the sum of how we live our lives, *for good*, or unfortunately sometimes, *for bad*.

Plainly put, self-deception comes as a result of our *not doing* rather than that of *doing something!* Of us not doing, rather doing something. It's not something that we deal with to some extent. We must stay focused and totally be doing something.

There has been a problem in the past—I'm sure the past history in the Churches of God, and it's still a problem in the Church of God—where people are training to have faith, *but they're mostly onlookers, sometimes seat warmers, and not actively engaged in their Christian living!* They're not applying and actually doing the work as instructed through God's Word.

God in His wisdom, has recorded it for us, because it applies to us today as it did over the history within the Churches of God.

Verse 22: "Then **be doers of the Word, and not only hearers...**" *That is the source of self-deception!*

We know that in the Protestant world, people think that their faith in Jesus is entirely sufficient for salvation; that they do not need to be doers of the Word, or keeping the Law of God. They have been taught that Jesus did it all for us, and there is nothing required of us except to believe.

For example: God's Word says to keep the Sabbath Day Holy, but Protestants conclude that Jesus kept the Sabbath perfectly so that we do not need to keep it.

Does that actually make sense, brethren? *That's the way they think!* Protestants would conclude that by keeping the Sabbath Day we are trying to 'work out our own salvation.'

True faith in Jesus Christ, however, also means believing **that we must do what Jesus taught we should be doing!** True faith, therefore, results in our obedience to the Word of God. *Very fundamental!* A right faith, a Biblical faith! We read the Word of God and then we follow through with action, applying the Word of God in our lives and become doers of the Word.

The definition of *works*, as James uses it, means that doing what God says to do, from keeping the Ten Commandments right down to 'visiting the fatherless and the widows in their affliction' is part of the works that we are referring to.

Verse 27: "Pure and undefiled religion before God and *the* Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their afflictions, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world." *Very plain!*

James 2:17: "In the same way also, faith, if it does not have works, is dead, by itself."

There again reiterating to a kind of faith that is *a dead faith!* That faith does not lead us to salvation.

John 2 also means that it does not lead to eternal life. ***Faith by itself does not lead to eternal life!*** So, what do we have? *Dead faith!*

John 2:23: "Now, when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the Feast, many believed on His name, as they observed the miracles that He was doing. But Jesus did not entrust Himself to them, because He knew all *men*" (vs 23-24).

*Jesus knew that there was not a faith unto action present; deed or sacrifice!*

John 8:31: "Therefore, Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in Him, 'If you continue in My Word, you are truly My disciples.'"

Very straightforward. ***Those with dead faith are deceiving themselves!*** Self-deception means they are fooling themselves at the same time.

Going back, Martin Luther—a brilliant man of his time—an Augustinian Monk, a man of great zeal and actually founder of Protestantism—because he did not understand this Truth of God, nor the writings of James, called James a book and ‘epistle full of straw.’ He made reference to that.

Martin Luther did not like James’ emphasis on works. He taught *justification by faith alone!* Luther basically took Paul’s words of Eph. 2—by grace you are saved through faith—and he determined that *faith alone can save you.*

Many who reject this Biblical concept of works would come up with catch phrases such as ‘the Law is nailed to the cross’ that you don’t have to keep it anymore. *I’m sure that you’ve heard this by others!*

Jesus did it all for us. He fulfilled the Law and we don’t have to worry about it.

*Very, very common in the Protestant faith!*

Their faith is an acceptance of certain historical facts about Jesus to Whom they realize they’re supposed to love and worship, *but do not know how to go about it; rejecting works!*

This along with Trinitarianism, justification by faith alone, is the core of Protestantism today. The expression ‘just believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved’; *faith alone reiterated!* Protestants can put on a pretty face:

- they speak of love for the Lord Jesus
- they speak of their continually trusting in Jesus
- they speak of their devotion to Him
- they speak of making progress in loving Holiness

***But they know extraordinarily little about Jesus Christ beyond that:***

- He walked on water
- He was raised from the dead
- He fed multitudes of people
- He was crucified
- He was resurrected

*From that they erroneously celebrate the pagan Easter!*

There is a sentimental and emotional religion that helps them to feel good about themselves and to feel good about what they think they know. But true words are difficult. Actions produce these spiritual fruits and commandment-keeping. Those are usually very noticeably absent in Protestantism. They know of nothing, and are

ignorant of what Jesus Christ actually taught Christians and what they should do.

Protestants say that they submit to Jesus as their Lord and Master without even asking themselves:

How do I go about submitting to His Law?  
Keeping the Sabbath? The Ten Commandment?  
and so forth.

Their minds, unfortunately, are closed. There is a fundamental disconnect in the unbeliever, and it works something like this:

They say that they are a believer and saved, therefore, they must be keeping the Law of God. ‘I do not have to go back over these things, it does not apply to me. I know that my faith is genuine.’

- Have you ever heard individuals make those statements?
- Why is this? *Because of one simple thing: they lack God’s Spirit!*

*Protestants are unable to examine themselves!*

***Good advice that Paul gives us: examine yourselves!*** This is a very tough task:

2-Corinthians 13:5: “**Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith...** [instructing us] **...prove your own selves.** Don’t you *of* your own selves know that Jesus Christ is in you? Otherwise, you are reprobates.”

It’s a very tough task for the common man to examine himself and see where they’re actually at. God’s Spirit reveals how faith and works are both vital to salvation and work hand-in-hand, faith and works.

Jesus said, ‘My Father works,’ and we know that Jesus works also. At the end of His life, Jesus said:

John 17:4: “...I have finished the work that You gave Me to do.”

We must be careful, for it is quite easy to see the lack of action and doing in Protestants, because by comparison we look rather good. But let’s be careful; let us not be fooled. Satan wants us to *think that we are sitting pretty.* But could we also becoming short when it comes to what we actually should be doing.

Are we producing the works that we have been commanded to do? The book of James contains over a dozen examples of wrong practices in self-deception.

Luke 21:8: “And He said, ‘Beware *that* you

be not deceived; for many shall come in My name, saying, "I am *Christ*"; and, "The time has drawn near." Therefore, **do not go after them.**"

There is a faith that will not save; ***that is a dead faith!***

We have talked about the Protestants, but James very clearly shows us many examples of *dead faith in the Church of God!* He warns of deadly faith, fatal consequences. James gives us a checklist for our spiritual growth, and instructions on how to go on to perfection. He also brings out examples of:

- self-deception
- false religion
- dead faith

*Let's keep our eyes open for them as we study this a little further!* The book of James is a contrast between:

- good works and bad works
- false religion and true religion
- false faith and true faith

James 1:1: "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes, which are in the dispersion: Greetings! Consider *it* all joy, my brethren, when you are beset by various trials" (vs 1-2)—*and problems that test our faith know that trials prove and improve our faith!*

Verse 3: "Knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. But let endurance have *its* perfect work, so that you may be perfect and complete, not lacking in anything. However, if anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, Who gives to everyone freely and does not reproach *the one who asks*; and it shall be given to him" (vs 3-5).

God gives us the wisdom, but many times we have to ask for that wisdom and do a double-check, a double take of the wisdom that we are getting.

Brethren, a short prayer of asking for wisdom is simply not enough. The Greek reveals that we must desire it with doing faith by works in order to acquire that wisdom.

Verse 6: "But let him ask in faith, not doubting at all because the one who doubts is like a wave of *the sea* that is driven by the wind and tossed *to and fro*. Do not let that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord" (vs 6-7).

We come to our first example of a false faith:

Verse 8: "*He is* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. But let the brother who is in humble circumstances rejoice in his elevation, and

*let* the one who is rich *rejoice* in his humble condition, because as *the flower of the field*, he himself will pass away; for the sun rises with *its* burning heat and dries up the grass, and its flower falls off, and its beautiful appearance perishes. In the same way also shall the rich man wither in his pursuits" (vs 8-11).

God allows us to endure the trials that help us, or bring us to perfection.

Verse 12: "Blessed *is the* man who endures trials, because after he has been proved he shall receive a crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him."

People tend to sometimes blame God when things get difficult. They say that He is being cruel and unfair to them.

Verse 13: "Do not let anyone who is tempted say, 'I am being tempted by God,' because **God is not tempted by evil, and He Himself tempts no one with evil.**"

*Another example of false religion;* v 14: "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away and is enticed by his own lust."

Here's the result of having gotten something we have no right to:

Verse 15: "And after lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is completely finished, brings forth death. Do not deceive yourselves, my beloved brethren. Every good act of giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with Whom there is no variation, nor shadow of turning" (vs 15-17).

It was only by the will of God that we became His children. We can never, never forget that!

Verse 18: "According to His own will, He begat us by *the Word of Truth*, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all His created beings. For this reason, my beloved brethren, let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger" (vs 18-19). *Anger and fighting is a form of false religion!*

Verse 20: "Because man's wrath does not work out God's righteousness. Therefore, having rid yourselves of all filthiness and all *the* abounding of wickedness around you, then in meekness accept for yourselves the implanted Word, which *is* able to save your lives" (vs 20-21).

The choice is ours! Will we choose false religion or good works? We must ask ourselves!

Verse 22: "Then **be doers of the Word, and not only hearers, deceiving your own selves.**"

At the end of the day, we can ask ourselves: Did I do anything tangible today to fulfill my faith?

Protestants read a Scripture for the day that makes them feel good, **but they do not do good works of faith!** Let's take a look now and see James describing **the false religion of self-deception!**

Verse 23: "Because if anyone is a hearer of the Word and not a doer, this one is like a man considering his natural face in a mirror. Who, after looking at himself, went away and immediately forgot what he was like" (vs 23-24). *We fool ourselves!*

James says *don't look at yourself in the mirror, but look into God's Word to measure yourself properly!* To see where you're at, as to what is being accomplished through the good works that you do.

Verse 25: "But the one who has looked into the perfect Law of Freedom, and has continued in it, this one himself has not become a forgetful hearer, but is a doer of the work. This one shall be blessed in his actions." *Again, it takes action!*

James gives us examples of wrong works, of false religion.

Verse 26: "If anyone among you considers himself to be religious, and does not control his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is vain."

We never know how much hurt or pain and destruction that we can do, and harm that we can cause with our words. Remember, in WWII there was a common saying: **loose lips sink ships!**

Our tongue can be our worst enemy. Even a little bit of misinformation misapplied can ruin reputations. So, guarding our own tongue is a good work. Here's what God expects of us:

Verse 27: "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their afflictions, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." *Quite a task!*

Visiting the fatherless and widows means to take care of their needs. Help them, because they are disadvantaged.

James goes on to make a point of practicing only selective good works, while sinning in another area, is another way of stressing false religion.

James 2:1: "My brethren, do not have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. Now then, if a man comes into your synagogue wearing gold rings and dressed in splendid apparel, and there comes in also a poor man in lowly apparel, and you give preference to the

one who is wearing the splendid apparel, and say to him, 'Seat yourself here in the best place'; and you say to the poor man, 'Stand over there,' or, 'Sit here under my footstool'" (vs 1-3).

God say, 'Don't have this kind of attitude,' saying that the poor guys don't have anything to offer. He might even be an encumbrance or hindrance to having a good time or nice time.

***You are not loving God if you do not love your fellow brother/sister in Christ!***

Verse 4: "Then have you not passed judgment among yourselves, and have made yourselves judges with evil opinions?"

God has a special plan for each one of us. We've covered this many times. For each one of us God has a plan. We have no idea what God plans for other people, and we probably don't even know what He has planned for us directly. But He does have a plan for each one of us.

Where do we get off by dissing others? Hold contempt? Disregarding? Disrespect? Criticizing?

Verse 5: "My beloved brethren, listen. Did not God Himself choose the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom, which He has promised to those who love Him?"

James says that you are 'hob-knobbing' with the wrong people. Do not be friends of the world.

Verse 6—*describing wrong religion again:* "But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you, and do they not drag you into the courts? Do they not blaspheme the worthy name by which you are called? If you are truly keeping the Royal Law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing well. But if you have respect of persons, you are practicing sin, being convicted by the Law as transgressors" (vs 6-9).

False religion is *being really good in some ways*, while flailing in others saying, 'God will overlook my weaknesses because I do the others so well.' Is that valid, that God will overlook our weaknesses because I do so well in others?

Verse 10: "For if anyone keeps the whole Law, but sins in one aspect, he becomes guilty of all." *That answers the question!*

Verse 11: "For He Who said, 'You shall not commit adultery,' also said, 'You shall not commit murder.' Now, if you do not commit adultery, but you commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the Law." *Fairly straightforward!* False religion is very prevalent!

Do not just take the 'good gain'; say it and

do it! Do not just do the talk, but also walk it! Do it!

Verse 12: “In this manner speak and in this manner behave: as those who are about to be judged by *the* Law of Freedom.”

We need some forgiveness when we come short. But we cannot say that there are just some things that God wants that are so difficult or too hard, ‘so I won’t do them.’ So difficult for us to do, ‘so, I won’t do them.’

Verse 13: “For the one who has dealt without mercy *will be* judged without mercy. But mercy triumphs over judgment.” *James repeats himself here so that we remember what he is talking about in his epistle!*

Verse 14: “My brethren, what good *does* it do, if anyone says *that he* has faith, and does not have works? Is faith able to save him?”

James is going to give us a real life example showing that false faith and works are necessary.

Verse 15: “Now then, if there be a brother or sister who is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; be warmed and be filled,’ and does not give to them the things necessary for the body, what good is it?” (v 15-16).

Here’s the false religion and dead faith. It does not profit; it was a bunch of sentimental talk only, without any works. Notice how this becomes a pattern and is a common refrain ringing out for the world to hear in the book of James. He repeats it countless times!

Verse 17: “In the same way also, faith, if it does not have works, is dead, by itself. But someone is going to say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ *My answer is: **You prove your faith to me through your works, and I will prove my faith to you through my works***” (vs 17-18).

When you really read these Scriptures, it is very plain that the two go hand-in-hand. When Jesus says to do something, it’s not just merely a suggestion. Doing spiritual works is a commandment. Belief change can be a false religion.

Verse 19: “Do you believe that God is one? You do well *to believe this*. Even the demons believe and tremble *in fear*. But are you willing to understand, O foolish man, **that faith without works is dead**?” (vs 19-20).

Abraham believed in God, but it was not until he was willing to do what God asked—and that was to slay his son Isaac—that he was justified by obedience that he showed to God.

Verse 21: “Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac, his own

son, upon the altar? Do you not see that faith was working together with his works, and by works *his* faith was perfected? And the Scripture was fulfilled, which says, ‘Now, **Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness**; **and he was called a friend of God**. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only” (vs 21-24)

If Rahab had only said, ‘Good luck, guys’ her name would not be here:

Verse 25: “Now, in the same manner also, was not Rahab the harlot justified by works when, after receiving the messengers, she sent *them* out a different way? **For as the body without the spirit is dead, in the same way also, faith without works is dead**” (vs 25-26).

James 3:1: “My brethren, do not many of you become teachers, knowing that we will receive more severe judgment.”

James presents another choice between false religion and good works, or true Christianity.

Verse 2: “Because we frequently offend, every one of us. If anyone does not offend in what he says, this one *is* a perfect man *and is* able also to hold in check the whole body. Remember, we put bits into horses’ mouths in order that they may obey us, and we direct their entire bodies. Consider also *that* ships, being so large, and being driven by strong winds, are turned about by a very small rudder, wherever the will of the one who is steering may decide” (vs 2-4).

Our very words demonstrate if we are practicing a true faith, or if we are faithful to God’s words. It’s expressed:

Verse 5: “In the same way also, the tongue is a little member, but it boasts great things. See how large a forest is set ablaze by a little fire; and the tongue *is* a fire, a world of unrighteousness. So has the tongue been set among our members, *the one member that* defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of life, and is set on fire by Gehenna. Now then, every species of animals and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind” (vs 5-7).

James repeats himself many times in his epistle. Our words, if we are practicing a false faith, we must realize it. We must be careful and keep in mind that God is comparing false religion to the true faith in living God’s way.

*Let’s some this up;* v 9: “With it we bless God *the* Father, and with it we ourselves curse people who are made in *the* likeness of God. From the same mouth comes out blessing and cursing. My

brethren, these things ought not to be so! Does a fountain pour out of the same opening sweet *water* and bitter *water*? My brethren, can a fig tree produce olives, or a vine *produce* figs? In the same way, no fountain *can* produce salt water and fresh *water*” (vs 9-12).

According to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is a false religion. It’s just like the world around us.

*We are looking to good works*, v 14: “But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not boast and lie against the Truth. This wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, sensual *and* demonic; because where bitter envying and selfish ambition *are*, there *is* dissension and every evil thing. **But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceful, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and without hypocrisy**” (vs 14-17).

We are looking to *good* works, *not evil* works.

- evil works is the false religion
- good works is following Godly wisdom

Verse 18: “Now, *the* fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.”

James 4:1: “*What* is the cause of quarrels and fighting among you? *Is it* not mainly from your own lusts *that are* warring within your members? You lust, and have not; you kill, and are jealous, and are not able to obtain; you fight and quarrel, but still you do not have, because you do not ask. *Then* you ask, and you do not receive, because you ask with evil motives, that you may consume *it* on your own lusts” (vs 1-3).

James was aware of so many of abuses against Christianity within the Church. Over and over he says, ‘Do not practice the false way, but be faithful to God’s way.’

Verse 4: “*You* adulterers and adulteresses, don’t you know that the friendship of the world is enmity *with* God? Therefore, whoever desires to be a friend of the world makes himself **an enemy** of God.” *That is a false religion!*

Verse 5: “Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, ‘The spirit that dwells in us lusts with envy’? But He gives greater grace. This is the reason it says, ‘God sets Himself against *the* proud, but He gives grace to *the* humble’” (vs 5-6).

God’s ways are not our ways; *they seem backward to the carnal mind!*

Verse 7: “Therefore, submit yourselves 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!” (vs 7-8).

- there is a proper wrath
- there is a righteous anger

I have heard that some church brethren, years ago, in a large group had disregard and even disdain for some other brethren in another group who were affected by a terrible earthquake. The large group made the comment that *they went out from us, so it serves them right*.

What kind of attitude and behavior is that? *It should make us angry, because brethren who are not mourning and weeping should be taught that we are all one Body of Christ!*

Is it not said in Scripture that where one member suffers, all members suffer with them. Or if one member is honored, all members be honored and rejoice with them?

1-Corinthians 12:26: “And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with *him*; *and* if one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with *him*.” ***That is the unity of the spirit!***

James 4:9: “Be grieved and mourn and weep; **let your laughter be turned into grieving, and your joy into mourning.**”

Here is an example of what true Christianity is all about.

Verse 10: “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you.” ***Humility is such a difficult thing for many of us!***

Verse 11: “Brethren, do not talk against one another. The one who talks against a brother, and judges his brother, is speaking against *the* Law, and is judging the Law. But if you judge *the* Law, you are not a doer of *the* Law; rather, *you are* a judge.”

That is not true Christianity! Ask yourself: Will my words bring peace and encourage. Later James shows that we are our brother’s keeper, and that we are obligated to get involved where serious sin is involved.

Verse 12: “*But* there is *only* one Lawgiver, Who has power to save and to destroy. Who are you that you presume to judge another?”

Condemnation is harmful; it’s not helpful at all! False religion does not seek God’s will.

Verse 13: “Now listen, those of you who say, ‘Today and tomorrow we will go into such a city, and we will spend a year, and we will conduct business and make a profit.’ You do not even know what *will happen* tomorrow! For what *is* your life? It

is even a vapor that appears for a little while, and then disappears. Instead, you *ought to* say, 'If the Lord wills we will live, and we will do this or that.' But now you boast in your own arrogance. All such boasting is evil. Therefore, *if* anyone knows to do good and does not do *it*, **to him it is sin**" (vs 13-17).

Good works are required, brethren! We must be doing, performing, sacrifice and helping in a good way. **IF** God is not first, **THEN** you are following a false religion!

James 5:1: "Come now, *you* rich men, weep! Howl over the miseries that *are* coming upon *you!* Your riches have rotted, and your garments have become moth-eaten. Your gold and *your* silver have been eaten away, and their corrosion will be a testimony against you, and will consume your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth for *the* last days" (vs 1-3). ***Fraudulent business practices are evil works!***

Verse 4: "Listen! The wages of the workmen who harvested your fields, which have been withheld by you, are crying out; and the cries of those who reaped have entered into the ears of *the* Lord of hosts. You have lived in luxury upon the earth, and *you* have lived in self-gratification; you have nourished your hearts as in *the* day of slaughter" (vs 4-5).

*Luxury and excessive self-gratification!*  
When you cook up the whole beef there is plenty to eat! This person is not the Christian, he is the perpetrator of evil action.

Verse 6: "You have condemned *and* you have killed the righteous, *and* he does not resist you."

Trust in God is *good works*, and we are going to end with *good works!* ***Be doers of the Lord!***

Verse 7: "Therefore, brethren, be patient until the coming of the Lord. Consider the husbandman *who* waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient for it, until it has received *the* former and latter rains. You also be patient. Strengthen your hearts because the coming of the Lord has drawn near. Do not complain against one another, brethren, so that you may not be condemned. Behold, *the* Judge stands at the door. My brethren, take the prophets who spoke in the name of *the* Lord *as* an example of endurance in afflictions and of steadfastness" (vs 7-10). ***We do not know who that righteous person is!***

Verse 14: "Is anyone sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him after anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save

the sick one, and the Lord will raise him up; and **if he has committed sins, they shall be forgiven him**" (vs 14-15).

Good works and righteousness are prerequisites to God applying the sufferings of Jesus Christ for our healing (1-Pet. 2:24).

1-John 3:22: "And whatever we may ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and practice those things that are pleasing in His sight."

Very simple! Keeping His commandments and practicing what we have been taught.

James 5:17: "Elijah was a man of emotions like ours, and he prayed earnestly *that it* would not rain, and it did not rain upon the earth *for* three years and six months. And again he prayed, and the heaven gave rain, and caused the earth to sprout its fruit. Brethren, if anyone among you strays from the Truth, and someone brings him back, **let him know that he who brings back a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins**" (vs 17-20).

James concludes his message with a powerful lesson. We are our brother's keeper! Among all the good works that we can do, laying down our lives in service to our brother is the greatest 'good work' that we can possibly do. Go to your brother who has a sin and you turn him around at a great personal cost to yourself.

**Verse 20: "Let him know that he who brings back a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins."**

1. faith without good works is dead
2. let us practice true and pure religion
3. let's us hide a multitude of sins

Summarizing the intent of my message today: The key to Christianity is in our ability to hear and recognize when God is speaking to us personally. Without that ability, which was initiated upon your originally calling from God the Father, we will never grasp the principles by which God lives and works in our lives.

We must be careful that we do not become ignorant and remain a ignorant to the amazing benefits of hearing from God in a personal way. That is what James 1 is all about.

So, what have we learned? It is telling us that ***our responsibility to God is to hear***, first of all; and more importantly, ***to do based on what we hear!*** We cannot do what we do not hear. It's easy to understand, so what must we do? ***Do whatever the***



*Word or voice of God tells us to do!* If doing does not follow the hearing, then we being to deceive ourselves, and it could lead us not to even needing anyone else to help us out.

That is a dangerous scenario; we must recognize when that occurs. This is so clearly defined and understood in Luke 6:46-49).

A very clear statement, the difference between success and failure is our ability to hear and to do. Jesus tells us clearly that storms do come convening against us—every one of us—at some time. We will all be affected by storms that gets in our way. There's no escaping that! How we weather that storm is important. It's all dependent on the ability that we have to hear and obey Jesus Christ and the Word of God.

That is what this is all about. The proof of our love to Jesus and God the Father are to obey what They say. You can find that clearly in John 14:15-31, which is read at Passover time.

We cannot ignore what God says and expect to keep walking in the blessings. ***That is deception; that is when we deceive ourselves!*** It is quite tragic that in the Christian world today in Christianity, we have been taught to be so careful and cautious that we have become passive in believing in our own faith. We have become passive and not full of action. We cannot fall into that trap; we cannot just sit and absorb rather than to hear and actually do.

We truly hear little about the perils of self-deception today. The tragedy of self-deception is what we do not know when we are self-deceived. It would not be a deception if we knew. That is it, and we must fight this enemy from within us, that self-deception. We must fight continually within ourselves. For the end result will take us to a downward spiral of decay, and we don't want that to occur.

The word *deceives* means to reckon wrong, to misreckon, to miscalculate, hence to draw false conclusions. Has that ever occurred in our lives? To cheat or deceive by false reasoning; has that ever occurred?

We cheat ourselves of the knowledge and the power of Truth that has been given to us. Thus it causes us to live in a state of self-deception.

There's so much more that I could say about this topic, and I've gone overtime again, but it's important. In a discussion that I had years ago with another church member, the statement was made: ***all deception finishes up in immorality; if not physical, definitely spiritually!***

Why is this? *Deception—whether self-deception or otherwise—always takes away from the Truth of God, and the Truth of the Holy Spirit revelation!* Without the Holy Spirit revelation working in our lives, we will fail to the level of dictating in our fleshly life.

Therefore, if there is nothing else that you got from this message, ***remember that it is important that we follow the clear instruction of the Lord God by developing the art of listening to Him!***

It is only through our ability to hear and discern that voice of God, that obedience that can be activated. It takes action on our part. If we listen we will hear what He has to say. When we hear what He has to say then we need to follow through on what He says to us personally with a physical action.

When God speaks, faith is released in us to do what He has asked of us. Faith is a prophetic word that comes by hearing and hearing by the Word. The present tense Word of God.

Romans 10:17: "So then, ***faith comes*** by hearing, and hearing through *the* Word of God."

That is the Source. Faith is an action, the releasing of doing what God speaks to us. So many opportunities throughout our lives are missed and wasted because we fail to act on what God has spoken.

Let us not deceive ourselves any longer. Let us be committed to act upon that which God has spoken to us. You will see the good fruit that comes from it every single time. Let us put self-deception behind us and stay true and faithful unto the end. Of what we hear, and more importantly by what we do.

Do not deceive ourselves with what we know, but do practice by the action. To avoid that self-deception, we must be like the one who looks intently into the perfect Law that gives the freedom and continues in it. Not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it! They will be blessed in what they do (James 1:25):

- remembering the Word
- doing the Word
- continuing in the Word

***That is what changes the character and counters self-delusion!***

Like a mirror, the Word of God will always show us the Truth! Let each one of us look closely into that mirror. Where do we stand? Let us rid ourselves of this most dangerous thing, that of self-deception.

I guess the biggest obstacle that we have is to even know that we are deceiving ourselves, and that comes from within! It comes from within ourselves. Our heart and dedication to be like God is what God and His Word should drive us to fight that battle of self-deception.

True faith cannot be had without works. A simple concept but difficult to apply sometimes! ***Let us not forget that! Let us not deceive ourselves!***

Scriptural References:

- 1) 1 Timothy 4:1
- 2) 2 Timothy 3:13
- 3) Jeremiah 17:9
- 4) Isaiah 44:20
- 5) Obadiah 1:3
- 6) Proverbs 16:18
- 7) Ephesians 2:8
- 8) James 2:17
- 9) James 1:22, 27
- 10) James 2:17
- 11) John 2:23-24
- 12) John 8:31
- 13) 2 Corinthians 13:5
- 14) John 17:4
- 15) Luke 2:1-8
- 16) James 1:1-27
- 17) James 2:1-26
- 18) James 3:1-7, 9-12, 14-18
- 19) James 4:1-8
- 20) 1 Corinthians 12:26
- 21) James 4:9-17
- 22) James 5:1-10, 14-15
- 23) 1 John 3:22
- 24) James 5:17-20
- 25) Romans 10:17

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- 1 Peter 2:24
- Luke 6:46-49
- John 14:15-31

NB:bo  
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