

Lesson 4
James 1:19-27
Self Deception

Memory verse: “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.” (John 17:17)

Our new nature when we receive our new birth must be fed the Word of God daily, that it might be strong to fight the battle. Just as the Holy Spirit used the Word of God to give spiritual birth, He uses the Word to give believers spiritual strength. “Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” (Matt. 4:4).

No matter what excuses we make, we have no one to blame for sin but ourselves. We learn from our last lesson that our own desires lead us into temptation and sin. God is not to blame. But God has erected barriers to keep us from sin. If we heed the barriers, we will win a crown (James 1:12). If we break through the barriers, we will find a coffin (James 1:15). Which will it be?

In one of the great Psalms of the Old Testament and by far the longest, Psalm 119:1, the Psalmist said this, “Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD.” One way to define a believer is that a believer is one who walks in the way of the Lord, who walks in the law of the Lord. True believers then subscribe their life to the Word of God, that’s basic.

On the other hand, unbelievers do not seek God’s law. In the same Psalm, verse 155 says, “Salvation is far from the wicked, for they do not seek out your decrees.” In Jeremiah 6:16 we read, “Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But you said, ‘We will not walk in it.’”

The emphasis in this section is on the dangers of self-deception: “and so deceive yourselves” (James 1:22); “deceiveth his own heart” (James 1:26 KJV). If a Christian sins because Satan deceives him, that is one thing. But if he deceives himself, that is a far more serious matter.

Many people are deceiving themselves into thinking they are saved when they are not. “Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” (Matt. 7:22–23).

But there are true believers who are fooling themselves concerning their Christian walk. They think they are spiritual when they are not. It is a mark of maturity when a person faces himself honestly, knows himself, and admits his needs. It is the immature person who pretends, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing” (Rev. 3:17 KJV).

Spiritual reality results from the proper relationship to God through His Word. God’s Word is truth (John 17:17), and if we are rightly related to God’s truth, we cannot be dishonest or hypocritical.

In this section, James stated that we have responsibilities toward God’s Word, and if we fulfil these responsibilities, we will have an honest walk with God and men. Indeed, how we respond to the instructions will help us avoid the pitfalls of self deception.

Things to learn: 1) Receive the Word 2) Practice the Word 3) Share the Word

Discussion Questions:

1) Explain James’ instructions on how to receive God’s Word in verses 19 -21.

2) In the previous paragraph, James compared the Word to seed, but in this paragraph (vs 22 to 25), he compared it to a mirror. It is not enough to hear the Word; we must do it. In what ways can the Word of God be used as a mirror in a believer’s life?

3) How should a believer share God’s Word as taught by James in vs 26 to 27