

SELF DECEPTION

(PART 3 of 3)
JULY 18, 2022

GALATIANS 6:3 NKJV – (3) For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

Such deception is common among religious people who accumulate truth in their minds, assuming that this is what “true religion” is all about. But Scripture was not given merely to produce theologians; it was given “so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:17). Holding the truth in one’s mind is not necessarily a character-changing quality. James 1:23–24 illustrates merely looking at oneself in a mirror is not necessarily an appearance-changing experience. The mirror can tell us our hair is a mess, but unless we get out the brush and attack the problem, the tangles will remain.

James goes on to contrast self-deceived, “worthless” religion with “pure and faultless” religion, giving a practical example of each. One type of self-deception is to believe that our words do not matter: “Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless” (James 1:26). In contrast, those who successfully avoid being self-deceived practice true religion: “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world” (verse 27). Empty religion allows a person to employ his bodily members and his material resources toward self-centered objectives. But God approves of “faith expressing itself through love” (Galatians 5:6). And now the last three red flags to Self-Deception:

5) Un-Bridled Tongue! “Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.” (James 1:26). We can also call this gossip. They love to talk about themselves. They love to talk about other people. They love to talk about anything and everyone. God gave us 2 eyes, 2 ears and one mouth and that they should be used accordingly.

6) A Self-righteous Person! “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” (1 John 1:8). **Self-righteous** – Making a show of being morally better than others; hypocritically self-righteous. In reality, these people are detrimental to work of God, tending to be a stumbling block to weaker Christians.

7) Caught up in Spiritual Poverty! “You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.” (Revelation 3:17). Jesus, from the candlestick, was speaking to the Church of Laodicea. This was a rich church, satisfied with its own sufficiency. There is where the Self-Deceived person lives. They think that they have it all together. They believe that they are right! They believe that no one can teach them anything!

To avoid self-deception, we must be like the one who “looks intently into the perfect law that gives 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, and continuing in the Word—this is what changes character and counters self-delusion. Like a mirror, the Word of God will always show us the truth.

My brothers and sisters of the faith, let us humble ourselves before the Lord, unless you stand to be humbled unwillingly.

SCRIPTURE READING

ISAIAH 44:20

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

Let us humble ourselves before the Lord, unless you stand to be humbled unwillingly.