

The Great Deception

by Chuck Smith

The sermon explores the dangers of self-deception in faith and emphasizes the necessity of obedience to God's word.

Duration: 12:05

Scripture: Ezekiel 33:31-33, Matthew 21:28-31, Luke 12:48, Romans 2:17-24, Galatians 6:1-10, James 1:22, James 4:17

Topics: "Obedience To God", "Worldly Deception"

Description

This sermon focuses on the importance of not only hearing the Word of God but also obeying it. It highlights the tendency of people to show love with their mouths but have hearts that chase after worldly desires, emphasizing the need for genuine obedience. The message draws parallels between the disobedience of the people in Ezekiel's time and the call for believers today to be doers of the Word, not just hearers.

Transcript

For our scripture reading this morning, let's turn to Galatians 6. We'll read the first ten verses. I'll read the first and the outnumbered verses, and Brian will lead you in the reading of the even-numbered verses. Let's stand as we read the Word of God.

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if a man thinks himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden. Let him that is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

Be not deceived. God is not mocked. For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

Let's pray. Father, we pray that this day our hearts might be open to the work of your Holy Spirit, and that we, Lord, might be taught and instructed from your Word. And so, Lord, we just look to you now for divine inspiration upon the Word of God as it goes forth this day.

And we thank you, Lord, for this opportunity, and now bless, we pray, your people as we study your Word together. In Jesus' name, amen. You may be seated.

Well, we're in the book of Ezekiel. This week it's chapters 31 through 35, and so tonight we'll be looking at these chapters. This morning we'd like to draw your attention to Ezekiel 33, verse 31.

Here we read, and the Lord is telling Ezekiel, they come unto thee as a people come, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them. For with their mouth they show forth, they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song, and one that has a pleasant voice, and you can play well on an instrument, for they hear thy words, but they do not do them.

And when this cometh to pass, lo, it will come, and then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them. In the first part of this chapter, Ezekiel is commanded and commissioned by God to speak God's truth to the people. He's to warn the people against the false sense of security that so many of them had.

He's to warn the wicked that if they continue in their sin, they will be destroyed, and if they turn and live a righteous life and all, that they can be forgiven. That if the people complain, well, that isn't fair. The ways of the Lord, they said, are not equal.

But Ezekiel said, God's ways are equal. It is your ways that are not equal. And so, there was this dispute between Ezekiel and the people over their relationship with God.

So, as Ezekiel is ministering to the people, the messengers come from Jerusalem, letting them know that the city of Jerusalem has been taken. It has fallen to the enemies. And so, they were informed how that the city of Jerusalem had now fallen in the hands of their enemies.

The reason why the city fell is that they had a false sense of security. They were trusting in the fact that they were Abraham's descendants, and thinking that they were descendants of Abraham, that God would take care of them. They would be safe.

They would be all right. And the difference was Abraham obeyed God, and they were disobeying God. It isn't just being a descendant of Abraham that is going to give you security or protection.

It is following after the steps of Abraham in obedience unto God. The prophet tells them of their transgressions. He said they were worshiping idols.

There was gang violence. They trusted in the sword rather than trusting in the Lord. And they committed abominations.

And there was widespread immorality. And God asked, shall you possess the land when you're living like this? And so, with the news of the fall of Jerusalem, the people said, let's go to the prophet and hear what he has to say about all of this. And so, they came to the prophet Ezekiel, and they sat at his feet in order that they might hear from the Lord.

So, there was a desire to hear what God had to say to them, but not necessarily a desire to do what God would command them to do. So, God told Ezekiel, they sit before you like they are my people. They will hear your words, but they will not do them.

For with their mouth, they show much love, but their heart is after covetousness. And so, one of the great problems of our day and of every age is that people so often hear the truth, but they don't want to obey the truth. So, they hear the word, but they will not do the word.

We know that the Bible tells us, be doers of the word and not hearers only deceiving yourselves. There is some strange quirk in our mind that men who hears the word and agrees with it in his mind, and he says, yes, that is right. I should do that, and that is the way to live.

Somehow, he feels that because he agrees with it, that that's not enough. But that's pretty much the attitude of the Jews there in Paul's day. And so, he wrote to them in Romans, behold, you're called a Jew.

You rest in the fact that you have the law, and you boast that you know God's law and his will, and you approve of righteous living, and you are taught in the law, and you are confident that you are a guide to those who are blind to the truth, and you can lead them out of their darkness. You feel that you are able to instruct those who are ignorant because you have the knowledge of the truth of the law, but in teaching others, don't you teach yourself? You teach that a man should not steal, but do you steal? You teach that a man should not commit adultery, but do you commit adultery? You disdain graven images, but do you not have idols in your heart? You boast that you have the law, but in the breaking of the law, you dishonor God, for it is not the hearers of the law that are justified before God, but those that do the law shall be justified. I hear what I should do, and in my heart, I say, yes, I should do that.

And then, I know that that's the way I should live. I know that I ought to obey those things, and I think that that somehow makes me okay, because I can agree with it in my mind and in my heart, but it isn't just an agreement. The Bible tells us it's doing it.

That's where God is looking for us to be doers of the word, not hearers only. So, they answered correctly. The one who actually went out and worked, but in reality, to know and to consent to the truth, yet it is another thing to put it into practice in your life.

And, you know, to know it and not do it sort of sets you up for a greater punishment than the person that doesn't really know. Jesus gave an interesting illustration there in Matthew. He said, what do you think? There was a man who had two sons, and he said to one, go out and work in the vineyard today and help the harvesters.

And he said, yes, sir, father, I will go. And so, he said that he went to his second son, and he said, go out and help the harvesters in the vineyard today. And he said, no, dad, I have other things I want to do.

And so, Jesus said, the one who said, no, dad, began to think about it and say, you know, it wasn't right for me not to go. And so, I'll go and I'll do the work out there. But the one who said, yes, sir, dad, I'll be glad to go, he didn't go.

Now, Jesus said, which one did the will of his father? Not the one who just agreed to go, but the one who actually went. And it's so with people today. Just giving a verbal kind of consent or a verbal affirmation, yes, Lord, I will, doesn't really cut it, unless you actually do it yourself, and actually you become a doer of the word, and not just a hearer.

They answered correctly, but, you know, the one went out and actually did it, and that's the one whose work really counted. In reality, to know and to consent to the truth, and not to practice it, puts you in line for greater punishment. Knowledge always brings responsibility.

And to know to do good and not to do it, the Bible said, it is sin. There in James 4 17. Peter wrote, it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to know it and to turn from the holy commandment as was delivered unto them.

In Luke 12 48. For unto whom much is given, of him shall much be required. And to whom men have committed much, shall he be punished.

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