

8 Ways to Deceive Ourselves

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon explores the various ways believers can deceive themselves and emphasizes the importance of humility and vigilance in their spiritual journey.

Duration: 1:00:53

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 3:18, 2 Corinthians 11:3, Galatians 6:7, James 1:22, James 1:26, 1 John 1:8, Revelation 12:9

Topics: "Self Deception", "Spiritual Humility"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the dangers of self-deception, focusing on the need to be vigilant against deception in various aspects of our lives. It highlights the importance of humility, being prepared to address conflicts, controlling our speech, and acknowledging our sinful nature. The message underscores the significance of being doers of God's word, recognizing the impact of our actions and words, and avoiding self-deception by staying grounded in truth.

Transcript

We want to turn to 2nd Corinthians in Chapter 11, 2nd Corinthians in Chapter 11, a verse that we have looked at many times. Verse 3, I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. Or if someone comes and preaches another Jesus whom you have not preached, or you receive a different spirit, or a different gospel, you bear this beautifully.

He is talking about being prepared to be ready as a bride, verse 2, as a pure virgin for being married to Christ when he comes again. And he says the thing that can prevent you from being ready for that wonderful marriage day when the bridegroom comes in glory is deception. That's very interesting.

And here he says that the first sin in the world came through deception. We must never forget that. The first sin in the human race came through deception.

Satan, verse 3, deceived Eve. And when you come to the end of the Bible, the book of Revelation, you see a strong emphasis on deception again. You see in Revelation in Chapter 12, one of the titles given to Satan in verse 9 is the deceiver of the whole world.

Revelation 12, verse 9. There's nobody who escapes. The whole world. He does with the whole world exactly what he did with Eve.

Now, I believe the Bible. I believe this is true. I believe that the entire world is deceived.

A lot of people don't think so. They think that, yeah, a lot of good people, they can't be wrong, etc. That's fine.

That's exactly how Eve thought also. There couldn't be anything wrong, but she was deceived and she didn't know it. And the entire world is deceived and they don't know it.

Chapter 20, we read of after the coming of Christ, and we are raptured to meet with him in Chapter 19. And then in Chapter 20, he comes and establishes his kingdom on earth and binds Satan, verse 2, for a thousand years. You know, just by the way, we can't bind Satan now.

Nobody can bind Satan. We can bind his activities, but you can't bind Satan himself. Jesus is going to do that when he comes to earth and he's going to bind him, it says in Revelation 20, verse 2, for a thousand years.

And at the end of a thousand years, he's going to be released from the pit. And during those thousand years, verse 3, it says he will not be able to deceive. 20, verse 3. When Satan is bound, locked up in a pit, that's the only time he's not able to deceive.

But when he's released, notice what happens after he's released. And the thousand years are completed, verse 7, and the Lord allows Satan, he could have sent Satan straight into the lake of fire from there, but he doesn't do it. He's going to allow Satan to be released for a short period.

Why? I mean, one would have thought that after seeing Jesus rule the world for a thousand years, all human beings should be just delighted to follow him and to say no to the devil. But God wants to show how corrupt man is that even after seeing Jesus reign for a thousand years, there are still going to be some people who want to follow the devil. You wouldn't believe it, right? I wouldn't believe it either if it were not written in the Bible.

You know, a lot of people think that man would only follow Jesus if he knew how good Jesus is. I mean, if Jesus came here and everybody saw how good he is, people would follow him. Well, he was on earth for three and a half years and they killed him.

Wasn't he good then? No, he's going to be on earth for one thousand years. And they're still going to reject him because we haven't seen the corruption of our human nature. At the end of Jesus reigning and peace in the world, no deception, and they've seen us with glorified bodies, there are still going to be people, sinners born on the earth at that time, who don't submit to Christ.

And then when the devil is released at the end of a thousand years, it says here, verse 7, he'll come out and deceive the nations again. It's unbelievable that the nations that have seen Jesus rule for one thousand years will still go after the devil. Yup.

And he's going to gather not just one or two. I mean, one or two we can understand. It says he's going to gather so many people, verse 8, like the sand of the seashore.

Boy. So many people who've seen Jesus reign for a thousand years, they still want the devil and they come and surround the camp of the saints. These people want to attack God's people even after all this.

And fire comes down and burns them up and the devil is thrown into the lake of fire. It's just a few seconds. It's all over.

But the devil is released for that short time just to show the human race. Don't think people will turn just because they see Jesus is so good. They saw him for three and a half years, they rejected him.

They'll see him for a thousand years and still reject him. It's only God's mercy that can save us from deception. It's good to remember that.

So, I want to show you eight verses in the New Testament that speak about self-deception. Now in the Old Testament, we read that Satan was deceived. Deception started there.

But, here are verses that speak not just about Satan deceiving us, but can deceive us so thoroughly, even believers, that we can deceive ourselves. You know, Jesus spoke about in the last days, even the elect would almost be deceived. It's going to be a tremendous amount of deception in the last days.

Paul says in 1 Timothy 4, the Holy Spirit underlines that many deceiving spirits are going to go into the world. I thought about that. I said, I mean, I'm a father, and I wouldn't like deceivers to come and talk to my children, even to my grown-up children, leave alone small children.

Which father or mother would allow someone whom they know to be a deceiver to come and talk to their little children? Would you do it? I mean, if you didn't know, you invited somebody to your house, you didn't know he was a deceiver, okay. But if you know the guy is a deceiver, would you let him come in? I mean, you may be able to handle him as an adult, but would you let him come and talk to your little children? Yet, God is a better father than us. But He allows it.

And the first proof of it is, He allowed the deceiver to come to the Garden of Eden, to innocent Adam and Eve. He allowed the devil to come as a deceiver there. And you know very well, when we look around at Christendom today, all the cults, all the multitudes of denominations, all the Christians who've got strange ideas, where did it all come from? The deceiver has been at work.

Very hard at work. And we have to say that God has allowed the devil to move even in the midst of His children. And we know that it says in 1 Timothy 4 that it's quite a terrifying verse, where it says that some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to these deceitful spirits.

So they were in the faith, that means they were born again, they were children of God, and then they listened, they paid attention to these deceitful spirits, and they fell away. I've seen cases like that. Good believers, fallen away to deceitful spirits.

What is the guarantee that you won't fall away? There are people better than you, who've fallen away. And that's why, if we study scripture and see these passages, these eight verses I'm going to show you, you take heed to them, and save yourself from self-deception, then you can protect yourself from these deceitful spirits. But if we don't protect ourselves from self-deception, we can't protect ourselves from deceitful spirits.

Eve was deceived by Satan, and we fall a prey to that, if we don't see where we may be deceiving ourselves. So, let me show you these eight, the eight ways in which we can deceive ourselves. The first reference, I'll go sequentially through the New Testament, the first reference is 1 Corinthians 3, and verse 18.

1 Corinthians 3, 18, it says, let no man deceive himself. Is he talking about unbelievers? Or believers? Perhaps both. But then he talks to the Corinthian Christians.

And he says in the next sentence, if any among you, if any among you believers, thinks that he is clever, according to the cleverness of this age, if he really wants to become spiritually wise, he must, let me paraphrase it, he must acknowledge, however clever he is, that in spiritual things, he is foolish. That's the first step to avoid these deceitful spirits from making a fool of you and me. Now, we have spoken often about that in the church, but in a lot of places, they haven't spoken about this.

What does this mean? See, cleverness is a matter of the mind. Divine wisdom is a matter of the heart and the spirit. And you know, just like physically, a man's brain may be functioning OK perfectly, and his heart may be weak, he can get a heart attack even though his brain is functioning OK, and vice versa.

A man's heart may be strong, and his brain may have a problem. Spiritually also it's like that. A man's mind may be very clever, and he may be a fool in his spirit.

There's no contradiction there. I mean, it's like saying, a man's got good hearing, but bad eyesight. Can you understand that? Sure.

Or a man may have good eyesight and bad hearing. Why not? It's exactly the same way a man may be very clever in his mind and an absolute fool spiritually. Now, I have discovered that in all the years I've traveled around Christendom, and that's 47 years now, most people haven't understood this.

Most people think, if you're clever in your mind, of course you'll understand the Bible. Wrong! That's as foolish as saying, if your eyesight is good, your hearing must be good. You've got to be crazy to think like that.

But it's as stupid as that to say that if your mind is clever, you must be having divine wisdom when you come to the scriptures. No! Jesus said in Matthew 11, 25, I thank you, Father, that you have hidden all these things from the clever and the intelligent people in the world and revealed these truths to babes. See, the only thing that babes have, which clever people don't have, is a humble heart, a pure heart.

A humble, pure heart is the essential requirement for knowing the truth about God, not cleverness. I'll tell you why. If cleverness, intelligence was necessary to understand the truth of God, then we would have to say to God, Lord, you're terribly partial because you made so many people intelligent in the world and others who are not so intelligent just don't have a chance.

But it's not true. See, intelligence is something God has distributed in a different way, just like income. You know that all the people in the world don't get the same income.

All the people in the world are not equally wealthy. All the people in the world are not got the same height or the same weight or the same color or the same intelligence. It's all different.

And these things make no difference. Your height or your weight doesn't make a difference to spirituality. Your wealth or lack of it doesn't make any difference to spirituality.

And your intelligence or lack of it does not make a difference to spirituality. But some people think it does. That's why, you know, when we in our Sunday school, right from the beginning, we decided that in Sunday school we will not give a prize to the children who give all the answers.

Who can give all the answers? The clever one. Because we are not asking them. We're not testing their character in Sunday school.

We're testing their sword drill, Bible knowledge. Who can turn to lamentations first or something else in the Bible? And it's the clever people. The people with the good memory.

I said, those guys, those little children are already getting prizes in school for that. For cleverness. Why should we give them more prizes in Sunday school for that? No! So we decided in Sunday school right from the beginning that we won't give any prizes for those who come first.

We'll give a prize to those who come regularly. Because that's faithfulness. It's got nothing to do with cleverness.

We do things a lot differently in our church from many others. Because we want to give value to spiritual values. It's not cleverness.

It's recognizing... So here it says, if you want to understand divine wisdom, just humble yourself and say, Lord, I get 100% in maths, and I get 100% in chemistry, I get 100% in physics, but when it comes to the Bible, I get zero. Say that. Then you'll understand the Bible.

So does it mean that if we are unfortunate enough to be intelligent, we can't understand the Bible? No. It says here about intelligent people. Some of you think you're intelligent.

I don't believe I'm so dumb. I think I've got a little bit of intelligence. Maybe not as much as some of you, but I still have some.

But when I come to the scriptures, I say, Lord, I can't understand this unless you teach me. So I put myself at the same level as the other fellow whose intelligence is very low. Exactly at the same level.

Now I may be able to beat him in maths and English, but I can't beat him in the scriptures. I'm at the same level as him. I put myself there, and I say, Lord, I don't understand this.

Unless you reveal it to me, I will get the wrong understanding from the scriptures. I'll study it, study it, study it, like the people do in Bible schools, and they go astray. And I'll go astray too.

So I have to humble myself and say, I just don't understand this. You've got to teach me. And that's how I've studied the scriptures for more than 40 years.

I come to this book, and I say, Lord, I'm dumb. And if I try to use my mind and think I can understand it, I'll be wrong. So like it says here, I make myself a fool when it comes to this book, because it's true.

I am foolish concerning spiritual things. Then it says, I, wonderful promise, I can become wise. I can become wise, and I want to say to all of you young people, you need wisdom.

And you can only get it from God's book, the Bible. And you can get it only if you come to this book with the humility that acknowledges that all your earthly cleverness is of no use when it comes to understanding God's word. We've seen that also in our own churches.

Some people who can't speak English and who have studied very little in the villages, what a revelation they have on scripture sometimes. More than a lot of PhDs. So we've seen the reality of it.

So that's number one. Humility to acknowledge that when it comes to God's book, my intelligence is not much use. Then I will protect myself from self-deception.

Okay. Then we'll go to number two. And that's in chapter 6 and verse 9. Let's start in verse 7. It says, It's already a defeat for you that you have lawsuits with one another.

He's talking here about some brother who's been wronged and he goes to court, verse 1. I mean, he has a problem with another brother and he goes to court. He says, that's crazy. It's foolish.

He says, how can a believer do that? It's already a defeat. He says, if you go to court, you're defeated already. There's no question whether you win in the court or not.

You're already defeated when you enter the court. Verse 7. Why don't you allow yourself to be cheated? You know the number of Christians who've gone to court against one another? And, oh, somebody called me a heretic. Or they defamed my God.

They defamed my God? Is your God so helpless that he can't defend himself? That you got to go and fight for this helpless God? I tell you one proof of the fact that Christianity is the truth is that if somebody defames my God, I don't have to fight for him. He fights for himself. He'll deal with his enemies.

That's the proof. Every other religion, they fight for their God. But not true Christianity.

Oh, no. Our God can take care of himself. So, we don't go to court.

And then he says, don't you know that the unrighteous, verse 9, will not inherit the kingdom of God. He says, don't think, oh, just because you say you're believers and you can do whatever you like, you can go to court and take other people to court and do all these things. And, don't be deceived.

That's what he's saying here. Don't be deceived. Fornicators and idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, homosexuals, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, swindlers, will not inherit the kingdom of God.

A lot of people get upset when they read something like that, but I'm just reading the Bible. That's what scripture says. That's God's word.

We're just reading the Bible. But what if somebody says, well, I'm a believer. What do you mean you're a believer? You're a believer and you're a fornicator? You're a believer and you're an idolater? You're a believer and you're an adulterer? You're a believer and you're effeminate? That means a man who behaves like a woman.

And you're a believer and you're a homosexual? And you're a believer and you're a thief? You're a believer and you're covetous, desiring things that don't belong to you? You're a believer and you're a drunkard? You're a believer and you're a slanderer, reviler, backbiter? You're a believer and you're a swindler? Sorry, he says. Don't deceive yourself. You can't be a believer and be these things at the same time.

No, it's like saying, I'm black and I'm white. How can that be? Black and white are no mix. He said, these are two different things.

Don't be deceived. That means, don't say, oh well, once upon a time I said, Lord Jesus, come into my heart. Now it doesn't really matter how I live.

Don't be deceived. This is the second area where we really have to be careful that we don't deceive ourselves. What's that? That I don't think that just because I ask Jesus to come into my heart once in my life, I can just live as I like and one day God will carry me to heaven.

Don't be deceived. He's talking about you. You were like that once upon a time, were slaven, but you were justified.

So, now, what is the need to give such exhortations to believers in Corinth if they are not in any danger of being lost? I can't understand this. Some people say, well, once you accept Christ, you can never be lost. Well, then why in the world do you tell these believers that, you know, if you do this, you do this, you do this, you won't inherit God's kingdom? This is the tremendous deception of Satan that he's accomplished among believers all over the world that he's made them feel, oh, well, if I've accepted Christ once, I'll be okay.

And they sail along, fornicating, idolatry, adultery, homosexuality, stealing, covetous. See, I'll go to heaven. And one day, they wake up in hell, and the devil says, ah, I deceived you, got you.

And the guy wakes up in hell and says, boy, all these preachers who told me that once I was saved, I was always saved, where are they? Ah, next to you. They're there too. Be careful.

Don't be deceived. This is God's word. Don't listen to me, just listen to God's word.

Don't be deceived. No fornicator, idolater, adulterer, effeminate, homosexual, thief, covetous, drunkard, swindler, rebiler is ever going to get into God's kingdom. That is the word that lots and lots of believers today need to hear.

You can't play the fool with sin. And think, oh well, I accepted Christ. You just can't do it.

You're lost. Maybe you were saved once upon a time, but right now you're lost. And you need to repent from there and come back.

Turn from that sin which will land you straight into the lap of the devil, and come back, and go through that list and see whether you fit into any of those things. And he's talking to people who take others to court. He says, don't think you'll get into God's kingdom either.

You think a lot of believers believe that? That you take somebody else, a believer, to court, and you go into God's kingdom? You've got to deceive yourself. There are a lot of people deceiving themselves. That's the whole meaning of that passage.

Okay. Now we go to one more verse, and that's 1 Corinthians 15. Number three.

1 Corinthians chapter 15. Where again it says in verse 33, don't be deceived. Bad company corrupts good morals.

That's another area where particularly young people need to be careful. They can say, well, I've accepted the Lord. I'm strong.

And you say, no, no, no. Bad company is not going to affect me. Bad company will ruin you.

You may be a very good-mannered, well-behaved, God-fearing young man or woman. But you get into the wrong company, it'll corrupt you. And you won't even know it.

Because it's a slow type of corruption. It doesn't happen overnight. But little by little by little by little, you get corrupted.

And that is an area where we can deceive ourselves. You say, oh well, it's okay. We're going to keep friends with some of these people who are always talking nonsense and speaking evil.

And when you work in an office, you can't avoid having to mingle with people who don't have any standards. You can't escape it. But if they are the ones you long to be with, that's the question.

Are they the people you want to be with? Or are they the people you just endure because you have to go to work and earn your living? Or are they the people you enjoy being with? I believe all of you need to ask yourself, who do you enjoy being with? Answer that question honestly to yourself. Who do you really enjoy being with? Is it those worldly people? Or is it godly people? Because that shows where your heart is. It says, even about a person like Lot, that he suffered living there in Sodom.

His trouble was, he had a very bad wife. He was interested in all that wealth. Of course, he himself was, but he got a little tired of it after some time.

But his wife wouldn't let go. But he got, it says, he vexed his soul. And do you find yourself like that in the office? You're in the midst of all types of worldly people with all their filthy conversation and their evil pursuits.

You say, oh lord, this place is so filthy. It's like living in a slum. I want to get out of it and get into some clean atmosphere.

One mark of the fact that we've really come into life in Christ is that we seek fellowship with those who have also come to life in Christ. I mean, no living person would like to go and live in a cemetery. No clean living person would like to go and live in a slum.

There's a revulsion there. Even if you have to spend more money, you'd rather spend that money and live in a decent place. And that's a mark of God's children.

It's not that they hate worldly people, but they don't like bad company. The illustration I've always used is should we be friends of sinners? Jesus was a friend of sinners. And certainly we can be friends of sinners provided we are as strong.

And the illustration I've used is of the tug of war. Your friends are on that side trying to pull you towards the world and you're on this side trying to pull them towards Christ. I hope you are.

And if you find that the rope is going that way, drop it. Run away. But if you find that you're pulling some of them towards the Lord, keep that friendship.

That's the test of which friends I can keep and which friends I should chuck. With each person I see, that's a tug of war between me and that person and between me and that person, me and that person, me and that person. Who's winning here? In this case, I find he's winning.

So I say, well, I'm not strong enough. Let me drop it. But in this case, I find I'm winning.

I can perhaps bring that person to Christ. Let me keep that friendship. If you follow that rule, you won't go wrong.

But don't ever think that bad company will not corrupt you. And when we talk about bad company, there are different levels of this. There's this outright worldly sinful company.

That's one thing. But also, the same principle applies to the type of believers you seek to fellowship with in a church. I mean, you know very well, as I know, that all believers in a church are not equally spiritual.

No. There's no church where all believers are equally spiritual. There's tremendous varying standards.

I mean, it's like school children from kindergarten to 12th standard or degree levels. In a church, you see people in that level, different levels. And it's just like a city where some live in the slums and slums live in very clean houses.

In the church also, the difference is very much and you can see particularly in the type of conversation that most people engage in. You mix with certain young people and they're always talking about certain things. And you mix with certain other young people and they're always talking about certain other things.

And you make a choice which type of young person you want to be with. That's your choice. And you'd say, no, no, no, that's not going to corrupt me.

This verse is written for you. The type of company you keep is going to corrupt you. It's probably already corrupted you.

And you don't even know it. That is self-deception. If we knew it, then of course we wouldn't be deceived.

I mean, if somebody gives me a 500 rupee note and I know it's a counterfeit, I'm not deceived. It's when I think it's a real 500 rupee note, that's when I'm deceived. It's when I think, yeah, even though I mingle with these young people, I'm still spiritual, that's when you're deceived.

Bad company corrupts good morals. They say in the world, birds of a feather flock together. And it's true.

There's a lot of truth in that proverb that we gravitate towards people who talk about certain type of things. Why? Because we like to talk about those type of things. And we don't mingle with certain other people.

Because they're talking about certain other things which we're not so keen on talking about. And if we had chosen the right type of company, perhaps we'd have been a lot more spiritual today than we are. And in a church, in this church, each of you, particularly you young people, are choosing a certain type of company.

You make a certain type of a young brother or a young sister your role model. Say, I want to be like that. I want to talk like that person, dress like that person, behave like that person, and do everything like that person, and see where you are today spiritually.

And there are others who refuse that and say, no, I'm not going to go down, let them be like that, I don't judge them, let them go their way, but I'm not going to go that way and see the difference in them. Lots of difference. You don't see it initially, but some years go by and you see the type of company a person has kept, has determined where they are spiritually today.

Particularly young people. And you know there's a lot of difference in the spiritual level of the young brothers and the young sisters in our church. And in every church.

And that's determined by the type of company they long to be with. Which is mostly determined by the type of conversation, the type of interest they have. So please remember that.

Don't deceive yourself saying you'll be able to overcome that. You won't be able to. Then we go to number four.

And that's in Galatians in chapter six. Number four, Galatians chapter six. We read here in chapter six and verse three.

If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he is deceiving himself. So that is number four. The other area where I can deceive myself, and if I deceive myself, as I said, I open myself to deception by deceitful spirits, is after having been a believer for some time, maybe I've been in the church for a number of years, or maybe you have a particular gift, could be preaching, singing, or leadership, or something, or some gift where others in the church recognize you.

You're not one of those who are hidden in the crowd. You're sort of a little prominent. Due to some ability you have, you're smart, maybe you're able to converse well, and a cheerful type of person whom everybody likes to be around, you're very popular, and in the church you're not one of those non-entities, you're an important brother or sister, or a young brother or sister, then you can begin to think that you are a somebody.

I'm not just an ordinary person now. I was years ago, but not now. That's the moment when self-deception begins.

If anyone thinks he's somebody, he's a nobody. He deceives himself. You know, it can come due to the feeling of seniority, like in government service.

I have been in the church for 20 years. I'm not a newcomer like this other guy. I've been working for 12 hours.

Not like these people who've been working for, you know the story, one hour. How dare you Lord, make me equal to them? That was their question. How can you make me equal to them? These fellows came yesterday.

I've been here for 25 years. I'm a senior brother. And the Lord says, many who are first will be last.

Not one or two. For one or two I can understand. Many who are first will be last.

And many who are last will be first. Why? Because those people who are last didn't have any high opinion about themselves. They said, we're nobody.

We're thankful that God accepted us. But those guys who came first, they thought they were somebody. You ask yourself if this temptation doesn't come to you.

Don't some of you older people who've been in the church longer, perhaps some of you older sisters, have an itch to go around advising younger sisters? Why? Because you came in the first hour, not the eleventh hour, right? Like these people. You've got enough knowledge in your head to advise them. You're a

somebody.

God have mercy on you. You're deceiving yourself. It's very difficult to find a spiritual person in most churches.

Because, first of all, it takes time to be spiritual. You can't become spiritual overnight. It takes time to be a spiritual man or woman.

Say 20 years. But then by the time the person has gone through 20 years and he becomes spiritual, he suddenly gets puffed up. And begins to think I'm a somebody.

And it's like the whole balloon being pricked and coming down to earth. There's no air left in it. It's zero.

That's why it's very difficult to find spiritual people. Because, gradually, they begin to think they are somebodies. They begin to think they are senior now.

They begin to think everybody's got to listen to them. I mean, that's why you've heard me say many times, many times I've said this. Think of the day when you first came to this church.

You can do that exercise right now. Think of the day when you first came to this church. What were you that day? Did anybody even know your name? You were a nobody.

In your own mind, remain there. And you'll be alright. Let God make you the most spiritual person on earth.

But in your own mind, think of yourself as the one, just like you were when you first came to the church. Lost in the crowd. Not disturbed if somebody doesn't even know your name.

That's how it's going to be in heaven. I hope you know in heaven there's not going to be any seniority. I mean, I'm sorry to disappoint any of you who were hoping that you would have some seniority there.

But, I have to tell you the truth. There's not going to be any seniority in heaven. They're all going to sing, Thou alone art worthy.

The rest of us are all at the same level. So let's get prepared for heaven. And let's consider ourselves equal to the brother who came yesterday.

Anyone thinks he's somebody when he's a nobody, he deceives himself. Okay. Number five.

Again in Galatians 6. And that is chapter 6 and verse 7. Do not be deceived. Again the same word. God cannot be mocked or fooled.

You can't fool God. Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. The one who keeps on sowing to his own flesh.

Talking about believers. Every day. Will from that flesh reap corruption.

One day. It's like, you keep on sowing weeds, you get weeds. A big harvest of weeds.

But the one who sows to the Holy Spirit will from the same Spirit reap eternal life. Now many people think the gift of God is eternal life. That's also in the Bible.

Romans 6.23. It is a gift. In fact, everything God gives us is a gift. But though it is a gift, it also says, yeah we reap it.

When I get it finally, it's a gift. And if I get it now, it's a gift. But here it speaks about reaping eternal life.

And I find a lot of Christians who know Romans 6.23, the gift of God is eternal life, don't know Galatians 6.8, which says, if you sow to the Spirit, you reap eternal life. It's the same Apostle Paul who wrote both verses. And if you take one verse alone, that's how the devil tried to deceive Jesus by quoting one verse, the gift of God is eternal life.

And I would say it is also written, if you sow to the Spirit, you reap eternal life. Put it together, you get the truth. So there is such a thing as reaping eternal life according to Galatians 6.8. How do I get that? By sowing to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

If you have received the Holy Spirit, even if you have not filled with the Holy Spirit, even if you are not baptized and immersed in the Holy Spirit, if you are born again, you have the Spirit telling you, my son, my daughter, don't do that. That's wrong. You listen to those promptings, nobody sees you.

Little, little things here and there, but nobody sees you. You listen to the promptings of the Spirit, you are sowing something. Do you know that every time you listen to the prompting of the Spirit, you are sowing a seed? And how many times the Holy Spirit prompts you during the day when you are traveling in a bus or riding on the road or sitting in the office or sitting at home or just lying in your bed daydreaming.

Little thoughts come and the Spirit says, not that. Or the Spirit says, do this, go and help that person. Or something, some prompting, and you do it.

You know what you are going to reap at the end of your life? Eternal life. What a harvest. On the other hand, here is another person who says he is a believer and all that.

But he sows to his flesh. Because the flesh is also there saying, hey, come on, do that. Nobody is watching.

Come on, nobody is watching. Nobody is watching, right? Nobody is watching, okay. And you do that, do that, do that, do that.

You know what you are going to reap? I'll tell you what you are going to reap. Corruption. Corruption.

The one who plants selfishness. It's a message the Bible says. The one who plants selfishness.

To sow to the flesh is to sow to your own selfish desires. Ignoring God, ignoring other people. Think just of yourself.

Selfishly sow to yourself. One day you reap a huge harvest of corruption. And that's why you find the difference between two believers who are both born again on the same day, ten years later.

You see a tremendous difference between them. Why is that? Because in secret one was sowing to the spirit. And in secret the other was sowing to the flesh.

And you suddenly discover after ten years, fifteen years, hey! Look at the difference between these two young men or these two young women. World of difference. One is reaping corruption.

And the other is reaping the life of God. Don't be deceived. Don't think the little choices you make each day are unimportant.

Everything is a seed. Every decision you make is a seed, is a seed, is a seed. The harvest hasn't come yet.

Harvest will come. And the harvest depends on the type of seed you sow now. That's what he's saying.

Don't be deceived. And it doesn't matter whether people are watching or not. Supposing you sow weeds in your garden when nobody is watching.

Will it make a difference? So what if nobody is watching? You're going to get a harvest of weeds even then. And if you sow good wheat in your field when nobody is watching, you're going to get a good harvest. It's got nothing to do with whether people watch you or not.

It's got to do with what you sow. Okay, now we go to number six. Number six is in the book of James and chapter 1. Number six, James chapter 1 and verse 22.

Prove yourselves to be doers of God's word and not only hearers. You know Jesus spoke about those who hear are like those who build on sand and those who do are like those who build on rock. The difference is not that one did not hear and one heard.

Both heard. One did, the other only heard. So he says here, if you're only a hearer and not a doer of what you hear, you're deceiving yourself.

Because if you're a hearer, you're like a man who looks at your face in a mirror. Imagine, all of us look at a mirror in the morning before we go to work. Dark, some dirt on your face or some food sticking here or there. And you don't wipe it off.

You go away and completely forget all about it and you go to work like that. We wouldn't do it. In fact, we'd stop everything else and wash that off before we proceed.

But he says, if you look at God's word, which is a mirror. I mean right now for example, as you hear God's word, you're standing in front of a big mirror. You're seeing yourself.

It's like an x-ray machine, which is... You know, I've seen certain x-ray machines where you go and stand in front of it and you can actually see your bones and all that. It's like that. What's happening right now.

God's word and you're seeing your insides. And if you see something is wrong and you ignore it and you go home and you don't set it right, you're deceiving yourself. It says here, you're deceiving yourself thinking that you're going to get anywhere.

But the person who does, who deals with that problem, it says, that person, an effectual doer, verse 25 last part, will be blessed. So there's a world... I mean, two people can hear and one person does and the other person doesn't do. For example, right now, all of you are hearing.

At least I think you are. And I think you're understanding as well. But how do I know how many of you are going to go and do? I don't know.

Whether you will do what you heard. That's... When you go home tomorrow, sometimes I've said to people, you know, you need to go and ask somebody's forgiveness. Because you've hurt someone.

You don't do it. It's up to you. You know, the way some believers behave when they've hurt somebody, they're too proud to apologize and say, I'm sorry, I did that wrong.

They just go and be nice to them and act as if nothing has happened. I mean, that's something like I steal somebody's money or I borrow some money from someone and I don't return it. And I just go and act nice to him and say, hi, good to see you and all that type of stuff.

It's a deception. If you hurt somebody, you're in debt to that person. You've stolen something from him.

You've stolen his dignity. You've stolen his reputation. And you don't return it? You're a thief.

How can you act as if nothing has happened? Now, God sees who goes and does something about it. Some people just don't do anything. Okay? Hearers.

Many, many hearers. They're the ones whom Satan is just watching for. Who are the ones who just hear and don't do anything about it? Those are the ones I can get.

So be a doer, brother, sister. Then, number seven. That's in verse 26 of James 1. If anyone thinks he's very spiritual and he doesn't control his tongue, he cannot control his tongue.

He is deceiving himself. His religion is worthless. Supposing you come to every meeting.

You say you're filled with the Holy Spirit speaking in tongues and all that. You know the Bible well and you do a lot of good, give for missionary work and very active in the church. And at home, you cannot control your tongue with your wife or your husband.

Your entire Christianity is worth one big zero. How many people believe that? I'd say 99.9% of believers I have met in my life don't believe it. They think I'm doing such a lot of good things for the Lord.

I've got this small weakness, I can't control my tongue. What do you mean small weakness? That makes your entire Christianity zero. It's not a small weakness.

It's zero. All the other things count for nothing. Here is where you slip up.

Because the mark of a spiritual man is that he can control his tongue. Not that he's very active in preaching and giving money and doing that. No.

See what it says in chapter 3, middle of verse 2. If any man does not stumble in his speech, he's a perfect man. If you could find someone whose speech was perfect, that's a perfect man. So perfection is perfection in speech.

That's how I know I'm pressing on to perfection. We have this verse up in front. Let's press on to perfection.

That means little by little by little. I don't get there overnight. It's a huge Mount Everest to have to climb.

But little by little I climb it and it's the way I find greater control over my tongue. I found that in my own life. Greater control over my tongue.

Greater control over the words I speak to people or the words I write to people. Greater control. That means I think about what I say.

The Bible says a fool utters whatever is in his mind. As soon as it comes to his mind, it flows out through his mouth. There's no filter there.

We should not speak everything that comes to our mind. A wise man thinks about some thoughts come into his mind. It may be from the devil.

I can't just speak it. Maybe from himself. He thinks about it.

Can I speak that? And he says no. Or maybe thinks about it again and again and again. No, I don't think I should speak that.

And he doesn't speak it at all. Or he purges it. There are many letters I've written maybe 20 times before I mailed it.

Because I want to be careful what I say. The Bible says in the multitude of words there will always be sin. And you'll always find that those who talk a lot they sin a lot.

It's true. There's a saying in the world if you keep your mouth shut they may think you're a fool. But if you open your mouth too much you may remove all doubt from their minds that you are a fool.

We must be restrained in our speech. James 1 says, be slow to speak and quick to hear. OK, the last one, number 8 is in 1 John in chapter 1 and verse 8. If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves.

What does that mean? To say I have no sin. Not saying I have not sinned. None of us will say I have not sinned.

That's another point in verse 10. That's another subject. We all say we have sinned so we don't come under verse 10.

This is verse 8 where I think well I have no sin that means I'm OK. You know you can have a conflict with somebody and you think the fault is entirely the other person's. He did this and he did that and he did the other thing, he did the other thing.

What about you? Can't think of anything I did. That's the attitude. If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves.

It's always good to recognize that there's always the possibility of selfishness in our actions and in our words and it's good for us to humble ourselves and say Lord, as long as I live on this earth I carry with me a flesh in which dwells nothing good. So I have the possibility of sinning every moment. May not be consciously but I can hurt people unconsciously.

Think you husbands and wives if you'll always remember you can hurt each other unconsciously. Brothers, you can hurt each other without knowing it. Sisters, you can hurt each other without knowing it.

The humble person will recognize that. The proud person says no, no, no, I'm OK. Such a person is self-deceived and he's a target for Satan to deceive or hurt.

So if we keep these things in mind we can be protected and we can be saved from that deception that's going to come all over the earth. Let's pray.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/XTaHgrLmpbl.mp4>

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